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BLACK BEAR
NORTH AMERICA.

THE BEARS BEGAN TO PUSH APPLES, CAKES AND PEANUTS THROUGH
THE BARS OF THE CAGE TO BILLY.

BILLY WHISKERS AT THE CIRCUS

BY

F. G. WHEELER



DRAWINGS BY ARTHUR DEBEBIAN

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ILLUSTRATIONS



The bears began to push apples, cakes and peanuts through the bars of the cage to Billy.

The procession finally moved off.

“Quit that!” shouted Billy.

“I’ll give you this pony, harness and wagon if you’ll let me have Billy.”

He rode on the back of Jumbo, the great elephant.

Tom and Harry invited them to the house.



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

CHAPTER I

BILLY FIRST HEARS OF THE CIRCUS

GHEN Billy Whiskers settled in Farmersville he fully expected to end his days in that quiet little community where he had a good home, plenty to eat, many friends and enjoyed the reputation of being the wisest of the animals at Cloverleaf Farm.

Those of you who do not know his earlier adventures had better read them in the other *Billy Whiskers* books. There is no time to tell them now for so much happened at the Circus we shall have to hurry in order to get through telling about it by the time this book comes to an end.

Even Billy himself, in after years, when he amused his great grandchildren with stories of his earlier life, used to say that the day at the Circus and those that followed were the most exciting and interesting of all his life; and although he was asked to repeat the story very often he generally refused, keeping it for special occasions like birthdays, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving or Christmas. He said if told too often, it would become an old story and all the kids in time would begin to regard their grandfather an old bore, just as they did

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

the Mexican parrot who was forever telling the same thing over and over again. Billy Whiskers, you see, was very wise. He knew that good stories are just like good clothes or anything else choice, that in order to keep them good, they must not be brought out every day.

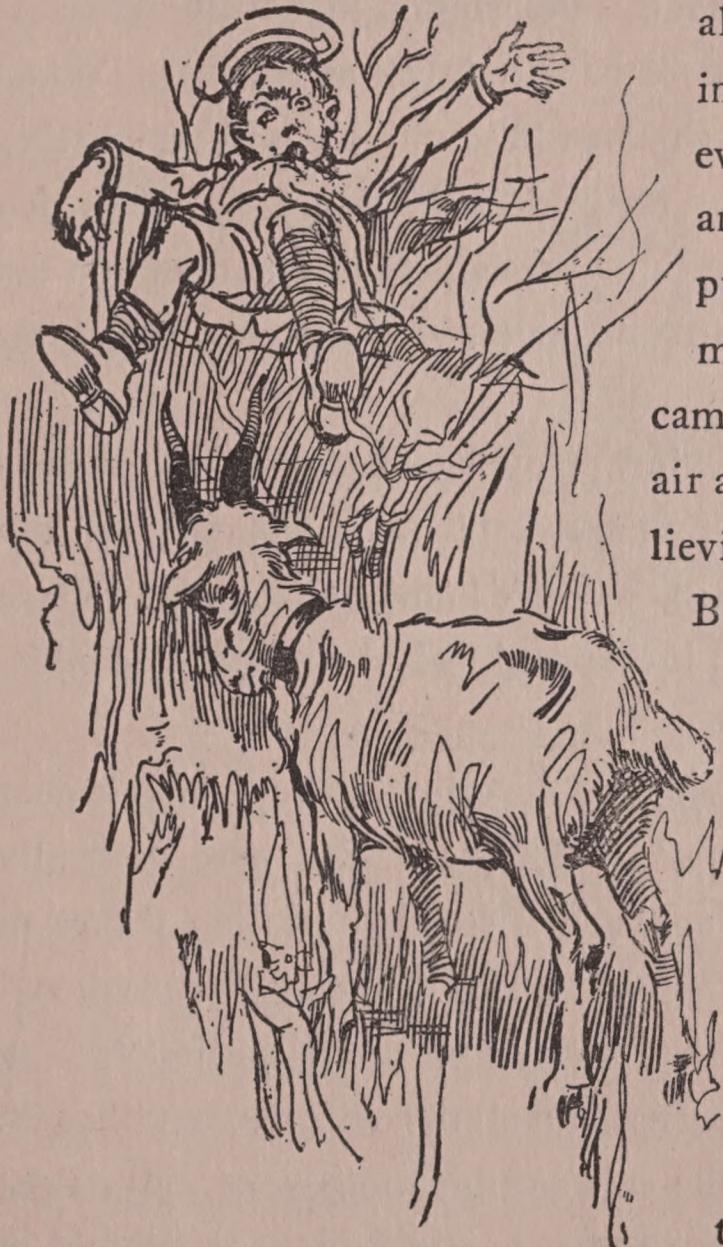
Billy Whiskers, many of you remember, was a very remarkable goat, larger and stronger than others, with a beautiful white coat that when cleaned and well combed was the color of ivory and shone like silk. His horns, too, always attracted attention, they were so long and shiny. He could run faster, jump higher and butt harder than any goat he ever met in all his travels, so that wherever Billy went he very soon became a leader, though he often had to fight before the other goats found out that they had far better mind than take the consequences of disobedience.

He was saved from being a bully, conceited and cruel, by a kind heart and sunny disposition. As soon as he succeeded in establishing his right to leadership, instead of abusing his power by taking the best of everything for himself, he would protect and help the weak, kindly look after the little kids and always see that the old goats were fed before he ate himself.

It was a sorry day for any dog who bothered the flock when Billy Whiskers was around. Many a one went howling home after Billy got through with him. Small boys, too, learned that it was safer and better not to throw stones in his direction. Probably there are as

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

many as twenty of them who have had the awful feeling that comes of trying to run fast enough to get away from the biggest goat that



almost anybody ever saw, knowing that he was losing ground every second, hearing plainer and plainer every jump of his pursuer, and the last dreadful moment just before the shock came, and then flying through the air as though fired out of a gun, believing his end had surely come.

But it never did. Billy Whiskers looked out for that and so timed his attacks that he could land his victim in a soft place, though he did not in the least mind if it happened to be a mud puddle.

One day he tossed a particularly mean boy right on top of a hedge where he staid

until his yells attracted the attention of the hired man ploughing in a

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

near-by field who made no haste, Billy noticed, to pull him out of his prickly nest.

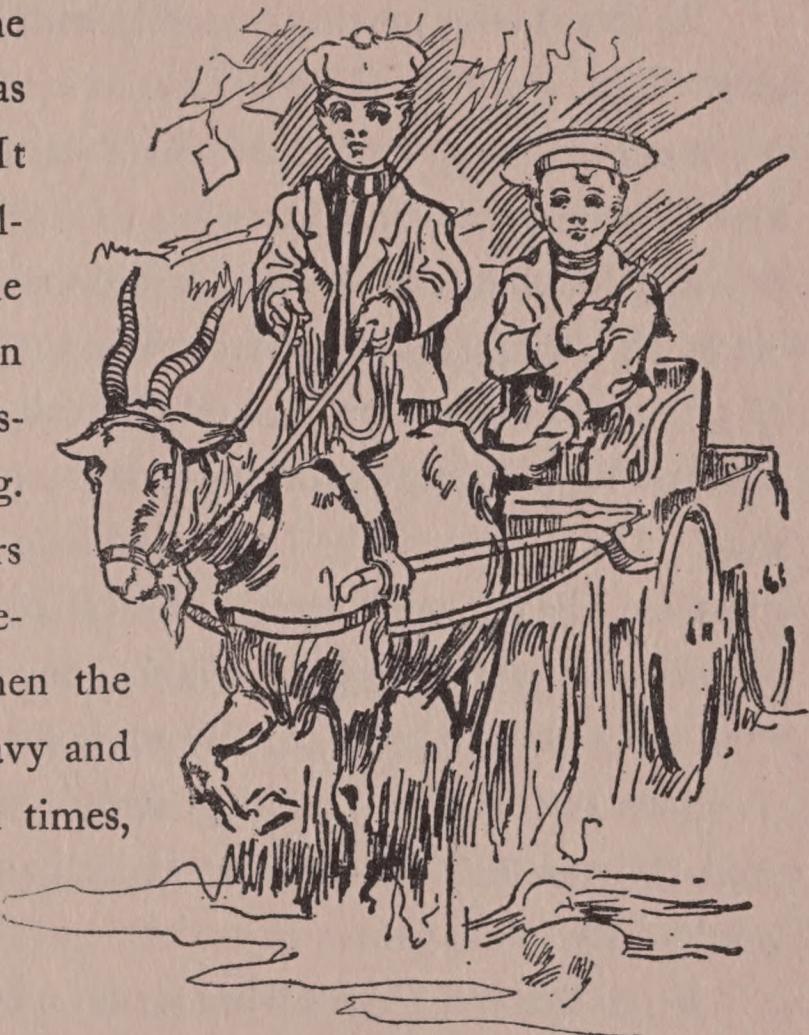
You must not suppose from this description that Billy Whiskers was a model of good behavior for he certainly was not that. When he was hungry, he would eat whatever he could get hold of, whether it was intended for him or not. He preferred a lettuce bed or garden generally but did not draw the line at eating clothes hung out on the line to dry, or going into a pantry, no matter whose, and helping himself to everything in sight.

Of course, tricks of this kind got Billy Whiskers into serious trouble more than once, but he never said much about it and the animals at Cloverleaf Farm either didn't know or wouldn't believe such stories of their Billy even if they had leaked out and been whispered around.

Ever since he had been living at Cloverleaf Farm, which is near Farmersville or "The Corners," as the place was more generally called, Billy had behaved himself, had stopped stealing things to eat, had quit fighting, which it must be confessed he dearly loved, and in less than a year had established himself on the friendliest footing not only with his master and mistress and all the children, but likewise with the black cat, the dog, the colt and his mother, as well as the other horses, the cows and calves and even Big Red, the bull, said to be very fierce, also the flock of sheep with Old Buck for leader.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

As was stated at first, Billy Whiskers had found life so pleasant of late that he had fully made up his mind to stay where he was as long as he lived. The work he had to do was much to his liking. It consisted mainly in pulling little Dick around the place in his express wagon when Tom or Harry usually did the driving. Now and then the drivers would want to ride, sometimes both of them, when the load would be pretty heavy and more than once, at such times, Billy was tempted to run away as he used to do in his earlier years, upset his load and smash the wagon all to flinders; but he stoutly resisted these promptings of rebellion, knowing well by long experience that it is with goats as it is with boys and girls better to take things as they come; that it is the hard work now and then, the giving up to others and readiness to do one's share of whatever comes



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

along that tells whether he is made of the right kind of stuff.

So things were moving smoothly with Billy Whiskers and he had no thought of not spending the rest of his life with the Treat family, when one June day he heard Tom Treat ask Jack Wright, his playmate and chum, if he were going to the Circus that was coming to Springfield the next week. Jack said that he had not heard about it. Tom, who had just returned from The Corners where he had gone on an errand for his mother, then told him about the show bills that some men were putting up on the sides of the post office and blacksmith's shop. He said that he had waited so long to see them all that he had forgotten all about his errand—he called it his "old errand"—that his mother was waiting for the baking powder and that he had caught "hail Columbia" when he finally got home.

Jack said that was nothing, it did not hurt when a fellow was used to it as he was, and that if he had been in Tom's place he wouldn't be home yet.

From this you can see what sort of a boy Jack was.

Billy Whiskers, who was standing near by at the time, smiled to himself for only the day before he had both seen and heard Jack Wright, who was now talking so bravely, spanked for going in swimming after his mother had told him he mustn't because the water was **too cold and likely to make him sick.** Jack hadn't acted then as

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

though it didn't hurt. In fact, it had hurt so much and made him so mad that he had almost decided to run away from home and join the gipsies who were then camping at the river not far away.

But he hadn't gone after all and was now waiting for his friend Tom to tell him more about the Circus. It made him almost sick when he thought that very likely his mother might, as further punishment for his disobedience, not only not let him go to the big Show but put him to catching potato bugs instead. "If she does," thought wicked Jack, "I certainly will run away and never come back." He got some consolation out of imagining how much they would miss him.

While he was planning this revenge, Tom was talking as fast as he could and his stories were all the time getting bigger and bigger. By that time he said that the elephant was as big as the corn barn, that the giraffe was as tall as the old oak, that the boa-constrictor could swallow Jeff, the hired man—he wished in his heart he would, for Jeff had told his father that Tom had made a mighty poor job of hoeing corn the day before—that there were bears and tigers, lions and hyenas, wolves and wild-cats, ostriches and eagles, and everything else. He then began to talk about clowns and beautiful lady horseback riders, Arabian steeds and the wonderful doings of the trapeze performers.

All the time Billy Whiskers was listening with might and main.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

He had never in all his eventful life been to a circus, didn't know what it was, hadn't even heard of such a thing before.

The stories Tom Treat was telling Jack Wright excited him and the first he knew he had forgotten all about his resolve to never run away again and had fully made up his mind that come what might and cost what it would, he, Billy Whiskers, goat, would attend the Circus at Springfield.

CHAPTER II

MAKING PREPARATIONS

BILLY WHISKERS had more than a week in which to make his preparations to go to the Circus. The morning after he had heard Tom Treat, his young master, telling Jack Wright about it, he almost decided to give up going.

In the first place he didn't know what might happen to him, and more than once the thought entered his mind that he would be running into all sorts of danger. You see that Billy was no green-horn. He had knocked about a great deal and had been in some awful tight places. There had even been times when it looked as though he must pay for some of his escapades with his very life. Those of you who have known him before this remember his adventures in the Rocky Mountains and in Old Mexico, and how he was once lost overboard in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Well, all of these things tended to make him cautious, so that while he had been quick to make up his mind to see for himself this wonderful Circus, he did not finally start on the trip until he had thought it all over very carefully and counted, as he supposed, the cost. Whether he had or not we shall see as we go on.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

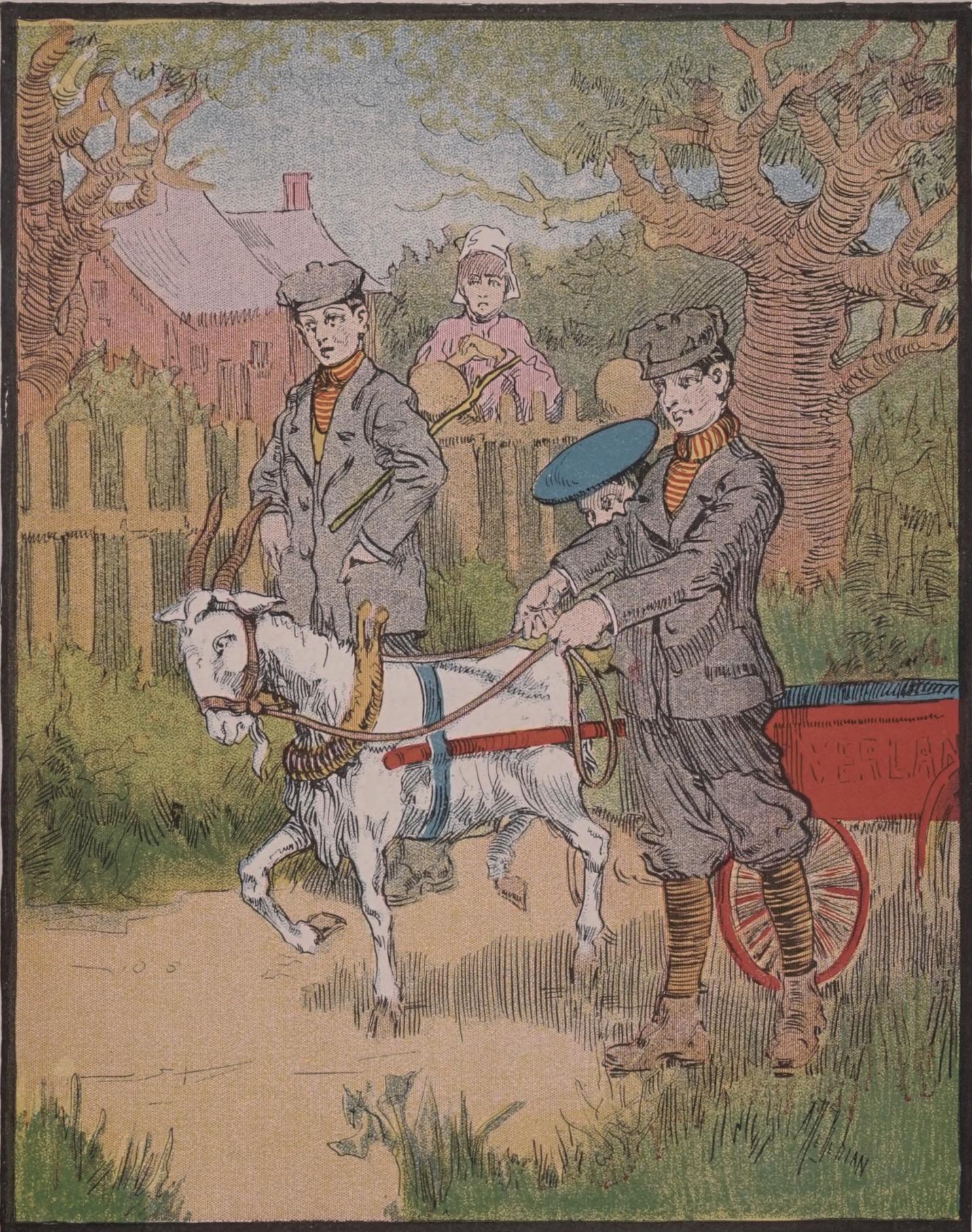
As the first step in making ready, he decided to ask his animal friends at Cloverleaf Farm to tell him all they knew about circuses, for, thought he, certainly some of them must know and can just as well give me pointers as not. He did not propose to tell anyone, however, not even his best friend, Rex, the colt, what his plans were.

With this scheme in mind, he first approached Abbie, the black cat. Her real name was Abigail, and while the boys called her Ab for short, sister Emma and Billy Whiskers always addressed her as Abbie, "for," said Billy, "it isn't so hard a name to pronounce as Abigail and sounds very much more friendly than just Ab." He knew that it was well worth his while to be on good terms with her.

"Abbie," he said, when he found her napping the next morning on the mat before the front door, "what's a circus?"

She didn't move though she heard every word that Billy said. The truth is she had been very restless the night before and didn't want to be disturbed in her morning snooze. More than that, she had no idea what a circus was and didn't want to let Billy Whiskers see that she couldn't answer his question if it could be helped. Cats, you remember, have been considered very knowing creatures ever since the days of the Pharaohs in Egypt, and Abbie was very proud of her race and its reputation and didn't propose to lessen it. So she lay perfectly still when Billy asked her about the circus.

He repeated the question in a louder tone. Still there was



THE PROCESSION FINALLY MOVED OFF.

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no reply. If his mind had not been so taken up with the matter, Billy would have known that there was something wrong and gone elsewhere with his question. But he did not stop to think, he was so bent and determined on finding out about circuses. So he next, with more force than he probably intended to use, poked Abbie in the side with his left horn. Then there was a fuss. She jumped up as though she had suddenly found herself sleeping on a bumblebee's nest, and the first Billy knew she was looking at him for all the world as he had seen her look one day at a strange dog which had chased her into a corner where further flight was no longer possible and she had turned to fight him off if necessary. Billy Whiskers had appeared on the scene then just in time to rescue her, but Abbie had now forgotten all about that debt of gratitude.

There she stood with her front and hind feet close together, her back all humped up, her fur sticking out so that she looked twice as big as usual, her tail all swelled up and jerking nervously, while her eyes looked, as Billy said afterward, as green as old Croaker's back. (Old Croaker was the big frog in the pond behind the great barn.)

"Why, Abbie," exclaimed Billy, "it's me, your old friend. Don't look like that! I only want to ask you what's a circus."

Then he got a piece of Abbie's mind.

"Billy Whiskers, you are no gentleman. If you were, you wouldn't be around here disturbing my rest. You know that I am

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half dead with neuralgia and that the only sound sleep I get is when the sun shines on my right side. Now you be off, and if you ever cut up like this again, you'll get a scratching that you can't forget to the last day of your life."

She would probably have kept right on scolding for a long time, but as soon as Billy Whiskers realized what he had done, he turned and trotted off without even trying to apologize.

"She probably don't know what a circus is and takes that way to conceal her ignorance. I'll never believe in cats again," thought Billy.

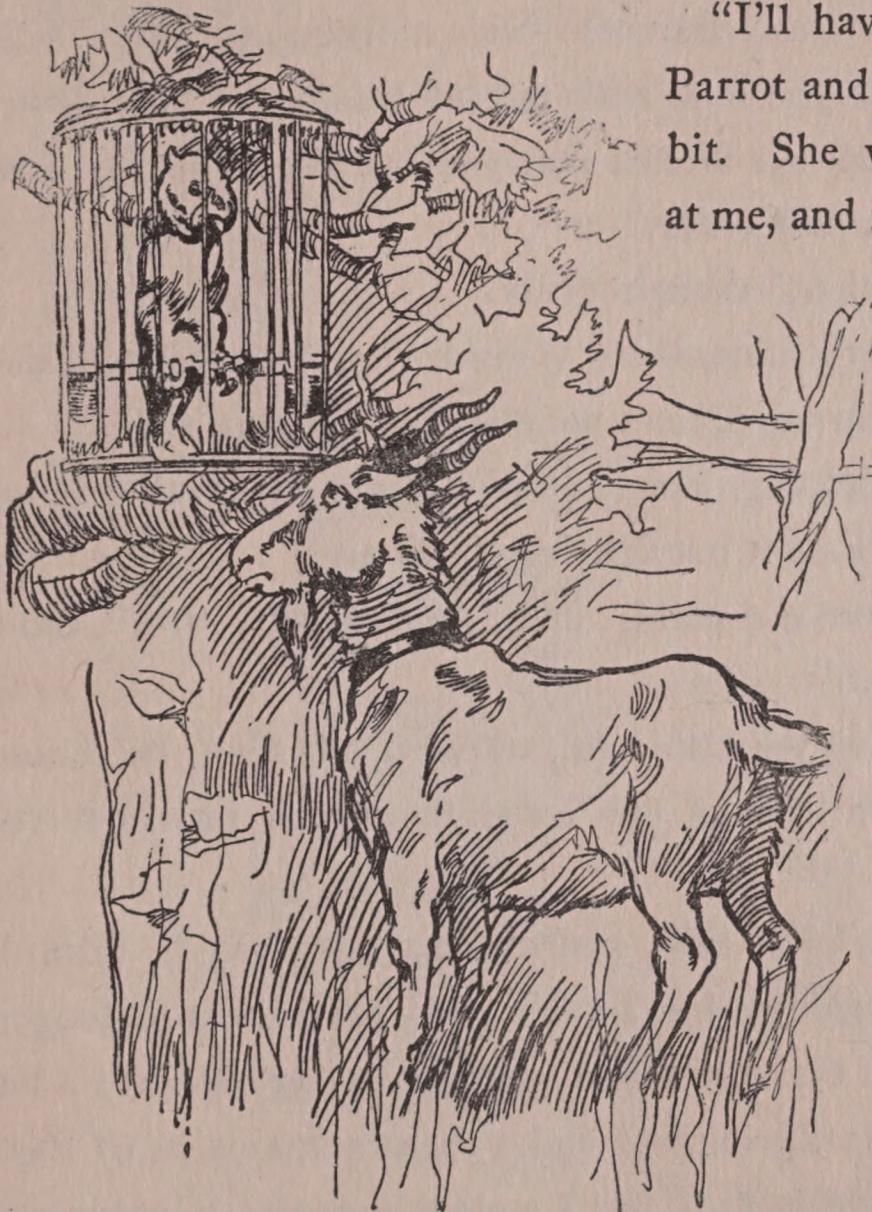
"There," said Abbie, when Billy disappeared around the corner of the house, "he's gone and I'm glad of it. He thinks that I know all about circuses but wouldn't tell him because I was cross at being disturbed. Wasn't that a good one about my neuralgia!" and Abbie laughed as cats do, and washed her face.

Billy next asked his best friend and greatest chum, Rex, the colt; but Rex, who was quite young, owned up at once that he didn't know.

"Billy Whiskers," said he, "how can I be expected to know about such things when you don't? You have been almost everywhere and I always thought you had seen everything. If you don't know what a circus is, there is no one at Cloverleaf Farm who can tell you."

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Some people would have been discouraged by this time, but not so Billy Whiskers.



be very sly when I ask her about the matter."

Billy was just saying these mean things to himself when he

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

spied Miss Polly out in the grape arbor, swinging and chattering.

"Now is my time," thought Billy.

"How do you do, Polly Parrot? Nice morning, isn't it? You have no idea how fine you look with the sun shining on your beautiful feathers. I've always known that you are handsome but you certainly outshine yourself today."

"That will fetch her," thought Billy.

"What do you want now, Billy Whiskers? You can't fool me by your soft talk. You are up to some mischief. What is it?"

Billy, without replying, beat a hasty retreat, thankful that he had not asked Polly Parrot outright about circuses.

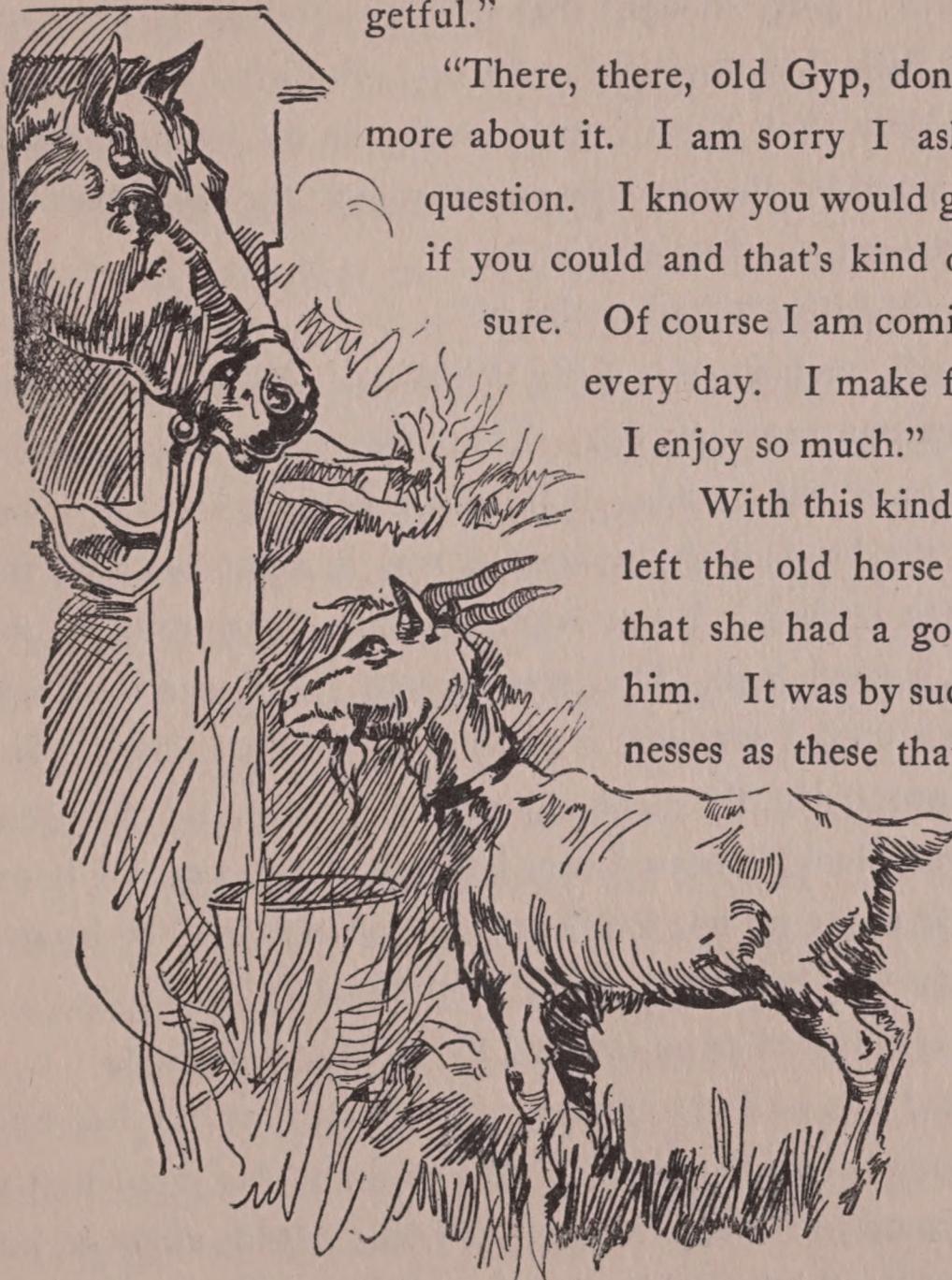
"She is a suspicious old maid," he said to himself, "and I can't afford to fool with her."

Billy then went to the stable to interview old Gyp, the horse that was said to have been in the Treat family for nearly thirty years.

"Billy Whiskers," she said, hearing his question, "I wish I could tell you about circuses, but I can't. My memory is no longer good. It seems to me that more than twenty years ago I heard a lot about a circus being in Springfield and a man by the name of Barnum who was connected with it, but I am not sure and it makes my head ache to try and recall the circumstances. I'm sorry I can't help you, and I am afraid that you will not come to

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

call on me soon again because I am so old and forgetful."



"There, there, old Gyp, don't worry any more about it. I am sorry I asked you the question. I know you would gladly tell me if you could and that's kind of you, I am sure. Of course I am coming to see you every day. I make few calls that I enjoy so much."

With this kind speech Billy left the old horse feeling sure that she had a good friend in him. It was by such little kindnesses as these that Billy made himself popular.

Billy felt pretty sure that the big Newfoundland dog, Bob, could tell him. Of late they had grown to be the greatest friends,

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

though it had seemed for a number of months as if they must always remain enemies. Billy thought that Bob was jealous of him, and Bob thought Billy was conceited and vain. But after they had together saved little Dick Treat from drowning in the swimming hole down by the wood lot, they had the utmost respect for each other and were ever after the very best of friends.

“Bob,” said Billy, “what’s a circus?”

“I can’t tell much about it, Billy Whiskers. When I was living in the city, a circus came one day. There was immense excitement. I went early to see the parade. After long waiting, I heard someone say that the head of the procession was in sight and that the elephants were leading. I ran right out into the middle of the street to get a good look. One was enough. I turned and ran, never stopping until I was safe under the barn at my home. The head of that procession, the elephant, was the biggest, the most dangerous, the worst looking beast I ever laid my two eyes on. I hope, Billy, you may never see one for if you do, your rest will be broken for months you will have such dreadful nightmares.”

Bob fairly shivered as he recalled the elephant to mind.

Billy asked him no more questions for he saw that Bob had told him all he knew about the subject. He made up his mind that it would do no good to ask any more of his home friends about it, but then happened to think of his disreputable acquaintance, the old

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

striped Coon who lived in the big chestnut tree down in the woods, so he went down to see him.

Mr. Coon was at home and a few knocks on the trunk of the tree with Billy's horns brought him to the door.

"Hello, Billy Whiskers," said the Coon. "What do you want? Don't you know that this is my time for sleeping?"

Billy did know it for he was aware that Mr. Coon spent his nights, to a large extent at any rate, in robbing hen roosts. In fact, their first meeting had been late one evening when Billy had gone to the garden to select some choice lettuce heads for his own eating, a thing he wouldn't have dared to do in the daylight. (This was before he had entirely reformed.) He was nibbling away at a great rate on the finest plant in the whole bed when he was startled not a little at seeing a strange thing creeping noiselessly along just inside the garden fence. It seemed to have fur and also feathers. Just as Billy decided that there was a spook after him and it was time for him to run for his life, the Coon, for he it was, dropped the white chicken he was carrying along in his mouth, and said:

"Good evening, Mr. Billy Whiskers. I have often seen you at a distance but have not had the pleasure of making your acquaintance before. It seems that you, like me, get your living at night. I think that we ought to be friends."

Poor Billy, what could he say? He did not want to associate

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

as a general thing with the Coon who was known to be a thief, but at the same time he did not see how he could snub him under the circumstances. So he replied politely to the Coon's greeting, and ever since they had been more or less friendly, though Billy never told anyone at Cloverleaf Farm that he knew the highwayman and robber who lived in the old chestnut.

Billy now answered the Coon's question by asking another.

"Mr. Coon, what's a circus?"

He was never more surprised in his life than at the effect of his question on the tough and wicked old Coon, for no sooner had the word circus passed his lips than the Coon fainted dead away and dropped down in a limp heap with his head hanging out of the big knot hole which served as the door of his house. As Billy could not climb up the trunk of the tree to fan him or dash water in his face, there was nothing to do but wait for him to revive.

Pretty soon he began to show signs of returning life and finally pulled himself to his feet again. Billy was then not more astonished at what he said than at the awful expression on his horrified face.

"He looked," as Billy said when he told the story years afterward, "as though he had seen forty ghosts with every last one of them after him."

When the Coon began to speak, his voice was so cracked and squeaky that Billy wouldn't have known that the bold old Coon was

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

talking had he not seen his jaws wagging. This is what he said:

“William Whiskers, (he called him “William”) never mention that horrid name to me again. It wakes memories that I cannot endure. The very thought of them makes me faint and spoils my appetite for days. Years ago I was captured and sold to a circus and it was nine horrible months before I was able to escape. Ever since, the very thought of all I endured makes me weak and sick. Nights after eating too much, even of the tenderest chicken, I have the most awful nightmares when I see again those horrid monkeys who worried me until I was almost crazy. I hated them most of all. If the time ever comes when I catch a monkey alone, I’ll make mince-meat of him if it is the last thing I ever do. But the monkeys were not all. I can hear yet, in my dreams, the roars of the lions, the snarling tigers and wild-cats, can see the crowds of people and feel the canes that were shoved through the bars of my cage and punched into my ribs, and can hear and see that fool of a clown saying and doing the same silly things day after day. Oh, it was awful! It makes me faint to think of it.”

Billy thought he was going to keel over again, but he didn’t. Feebly waving his paw in farewell, he slowly withdrew from sight.

The story told by the old Coon made Billy very sober, and again he wondered if he had better not stay at home and take no risks, for he said to himself:

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"What if the circus folks should take it into their heads to capture me and make me one of their attractions and I should have as bad a time as the old Coon? I'd wish then that I had stayed at home and minded my own business."

After the day spent in fruitless inquiry, he went to bed saying that he would sleep over the matter and decide later what he had better do.

CHAPTER III.

BILLY WHISKERS DECIDES

BILLY awakened from a troubled sleep with doubts and misgivings in his mind. If the day hadn't been fine with everything and everybody looking bright and cheerful, the chances are that he would have then and there dismissed all thought of the Circus and spent the balance of his days in happy though humdrum existence at Cloverleaf Farm. In that case this story would never have been told.

It so happened that Mrs. Treat, the mother of Tom, Dick and Harry, wanted some things that morning, and so, after breakfast, told Tom, who was the eldest of the three, to wash his face and hands *clean*, put on his shoes and stockings, and make himself neat and tidy generally, for she wanted him to go to The Corners to "transact some business" for her.

What she really wanted was a spool of thread, a dozen clothespins, some blueing and two yards of cheese cloth—just common "errands" as everybody can see. But Mrs. Treat knew how to manage boys and she was alive to the fact that her son Thomas had rather "transact business" than "do errands." Even so, he made it a condition of his cheerful going that Harry and Dick be allowed to

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

accompany him, the latter in his new express wagon drawn by Billy Whiskers.

"You may all go," said Mrs. Treat, "but be very careful, and don't stay too long. Keep a close eye on Billy Whiskers. We all love Billy, and he is certainly the handsomest goat in the county, but you mustn't forget that we are not as well acquainted with his early history as I wish we were. I have never been able to dismiss the feeling that there are things in his past that are not to his credit. So you want to watch out."

The boys promised, though they did not for one minute believe that Billy Whiskers had not always been the friendly, quiet, peaceable goat that he now appeared. Mrs. Treat, however, was wiser and spoke truer than she knew, as this story will show a little later, though she need not have given herself any anxiety on the present occasion for little Dick and his new, red wagon. Dick was the dearest, brown-eyed little chap in the world and everybody loved him, Billy Whiskers included, who wouldn't for anything have any harm or hurt come to his little master when under his care.

Although they had been through breakfast by seven o'clock, or a little later, it was nine before the Treat boys were ready to start to The Corners.

Billy looked very scrumptious in his silver-plated harness, newly polished, especially after he was hitched to the new wagon, marked

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

in gilt letters on the sides "Overland Limited," with Master Dick in the seat, reins in hand, but no whip for Billy Whiskers had early

given them to understand that a whip was worse than useless where he was concerned.

The procession finally moved off with Tom on one side of Billy and Harry on the other.

"We'll have to keep this up," whispered Harry, "until we get out of mother's sight, and then we can go as we please." Harry was always called a "queer child."

At The Corners Billy Whiskers saw for himself the wonderful bill posters that Tom

had told Jack Wright about.

The boys spent as much time as they dared looking at them,



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

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which gave Billy a good chance to carefully examine the marvelous sights.

As all my readers know how circus billboards look and how much they make one want to go to the show, they will not be surprised that Billy Whiskers quite forgot the warning of old Mr. Coon and again decided that he must see for himself these wonderful animals and astonishing performances that the reading at the bottom said were but faintly portrayed by the pictures above.

When Billy reached home, having brought little Dick and his wagon safely through, he lay down to think over once more the Circus, the difficulties in the way and the fun it promised.

All of a sudden he bethought him of his old friend and fellow-traveller, Terrence Bull Pup, who, he now remembered, was living in Springfield where the Circus was to hold forth. Although Billy had not answered Terrence's last letter, having made up his mind to cut loose from his reckless friends when he came to Cloverleaf to live, he nevertheless now decided to write to him, telling of his intention to come to the Circus and ask his advice about a place to stay.

"Of course," thought Billy, "he'll ask me to come and stop with him."

So he wrote and sent in the animal fashion and language the following well-worded and friendly letter.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Cloverleaf Farm, June 10th, 1908.

Terrence Bull Pup, Esq.,

Maiden Lane, Springfield, Ohio.

My Dear Friend Terry:—

Although it has been a long time since you have heard from me, I am still your true friend and now welcome the prospect of renewing our old-time acquaintance with the utmost pleasure.

You will be glad to hear that I am well and happy, with a good home, plenty to eat and surrounded by many friends. I am no longer the sort of goat you used to know, having turned over a new leaf on coming here to live. I have given up fighting almost altogether, very rarely steal things to eat or rob pantries or clothes-lines now, do but little butting, and, in short, live a peaceable and respectable life, and try to be a good example to all my friends and neighbors. I never expected to do anything different but I am hearing so much about the Circus that is coming to Springfield, and the billboards that I saw at The Corners this forenoon make it appear so attractive that I have decided to take it in, and so write to you, my old friend, to ask if it will be quite convenient for you to have me for a guest at the time. I not only want to see you, but feel that your greater familiarity with the ways of the world at present will be of the greatest help to me in keeping out of danger and in seeing all the wonderful sights to best advantage.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

I trust that this letter finds you well and as handsome as ever.

A prompt reply will be appreciated by

Faithfully your friend,

Billy Whiskers.

"That's a good letter," said Billy Whiskers, as he read it over before posting. "It will bring an invitation all right or I miss my guess. He can't resist that reference to his good looks. Terry always was vain. As near as I can make out, he considers his pug nose very cute and attractive and those bow legs of his as models of grace."

When Terrence Bull Pup received Billy Whiskers' letter he was of two minds, both pleased and mad.

At first he was inclined to accept Billy's words of friendship and flattery as the true expressions of his warm heart, and write him a reply with a cordial invitation to come to Springfield at once, stay for a few days and be his guest at the Circus.

On reading the letter a second time, it occurred to him that Billy Whiskers might be trying to make use of him and that all his soft remarks about true friendship and his good looks were just so much bait with which to catch what he wanted.

He remembered that in the old days Billy Whiskers was in the habit of thus working his friends, and he also recalled the fact that his last letter, in which he had suggested joining Billy in his new

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

home at Cloverleaf Farm, had never been answered, a neglect on the part of Billy that cut deep and rankled whenever he thought of it.

More than that, Terrence did not like and had no sympathy with this talk about turning over a new leaf. Terrence Bull Pup knew well that HE had turned over no new leaves. In fact, if the truth must be told, he was now known all up and down Maiden Lane, the street on which he lived, as "the terror."

"No," he said, after looking at the matter from all sides, "I'll not be taken in by sly old Billy this time. If he imagines he can fool me by his flattery and true friendship dodge he'll find himself greatly mistaken. Anyhow, his letter gives me a chance to give him a piece of my mind straight, and I'll just do it, too."

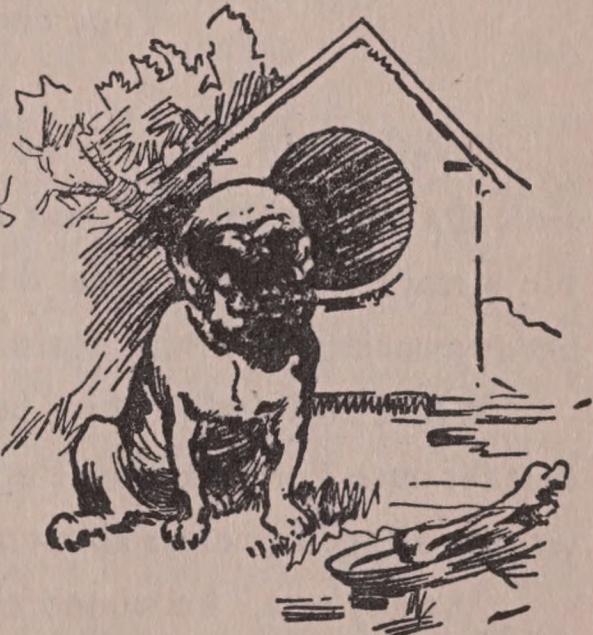
So he wrote as follows:

Springfield, June 12th, 1908.

Dear Bill:

Your letter just received. I can't say that I was very pleased to get it. If you had answered my last letter I might feel different.

Of course, if you come to the city to attend the Circus, I shan't



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

run you off when you knock at my door. But my advice to you is to keep away. You are altogether too good now to go to circuses, though I well remember the time when you were not good enough. This talk of yours about turning over new leaves don't go with the writer of this letter one bit. I knew you too well of old, but even if you think you are better than you used to be, you had best take no chances of a relapse, but stay where you are, which is the advice of

Your one-time friend,

Terry B. P.

"Well," said Billy, as he finished reading this letter, "if that ain't the very worst! I must have rubbed his fur the wrong way. He always was the meanest dog I ever knew. This settles it—I'll never associate with him again."

While Billy talked big, he had a sneaking feeling all the time that for once Terrence Bull Pup had the best of him. His conscience was not altogether clear about not having answered his letter.

"At any rate," he wound up, "I'll go to that old Circus now if I never do another thing. I may have a chance to show that dog a trick or two yet. I'll start day after tomorrow."

CHAPTER IV

ON HIS WAY TO THE CIRCUS

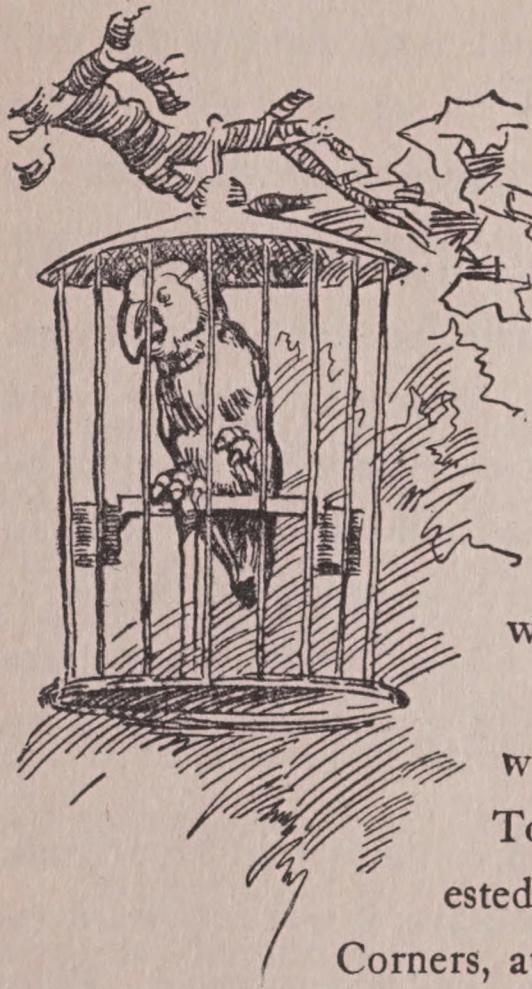
TIT was ten miles from Cloverleaf Farm to Springfield so Billy Whiskers decided to make an early start for he didn't want to miss any of the sights by being late. More than that, he could get away much easier before the family were up when it would be necessary to make all kinds of excuses and tell all sorts of fibs, and even then it was as likely as not that the boys would decide that it would be safer for him to be locked up all day, which would make no end of difficulty and delay, even if he finally succeeded in breaking out and making his escape.

The evening before he went around calling on all his friends. While he did not actually bid them good-bye, it was afterward remarked that he had seemed unusually kind and subdued. Polly Parrot, talking it over with the Plymouth Rock family, said that she felt sure all the time that there was something up, but she had never hoped for any such good luck as his clearing out. At which heartless speech the Plymouth Rocks were greatly scandalized, and they told Polly, all talking together, that she ought to be ashamed of herself and that they did not care to associate with her any more.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

until she was ready to take back what she had said and apologize.

"Uh," said Polly, "Apologize nothing! He'll be back all too soon. You'll see," and she laughed like a crazy person.



It seems that she had overheard Billy Whiskers call her a mean old maid a few days before and had not yet either forgotten or forgiven that slight.

All the animals at Cloverleaf, except Polly Parrot, were deeply grieved when it was learned on Circus day morning that Billy Whiskers was nowhere to be found.

There were all sorts of guesses as to what had become of him.

Tom and Harry, remembering how interested he had been in the billboards at The Corners, at once suspected the truth, and nothing must do but that their father must take them to Springfield that they might look for missing Billy.

Mr. Treat, who had been trying to find some good excuse for going, agreed with the boys very much more readily than they had expected and told them to be ready to start by eight o'clock so as not to miss the parade.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Mrs. Treat, who had said over and over again that Springfield was too far away for any of them to think of going, when she learned what preparations were afoot, at once decided that it would not be safe for them to go without her, and if she went little Dick would have to go too. So at the appointed time they all started.

Billy Whiskers, though he never intended it, was therefore responsible for his little masters seeing a circus for the first time in their lives, and he was glad at having been able to do them that great favor when, in the end, it all came out well.

In the meanwhile Billy, who had started a little after four o'clock in the morning, was on his way to Springfield, following the road which he learned by previous inquiry was the shortest and most direct.

His mind was not entirely at peace for it troubled his conscience to have thus unceremoniously left behind him the home and friends where and by whom he had, on the whole, been treated most kindly; and while it was his good intention to return the following day at latest, there was an uneasy feeling in his bones that it might be a long time before he should see Cloverleaf Farm again, but these sad thoughts and gloomy forebodings were soon outweighed by the excitement of the journey and the anticipation of the pleasures in store.

He had gone probably four miles before anything out of the

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

common occurred to disturb his serenity or interfere with his peaceful progress.

It is altogether likely that he might have gone on and reached Springfield by eight o'clock at latest, in ample time to see not only the great parade but some of the show cars unload as well, had he not turned aside to snip a few heads of delicious looking cabbage which he chanced to spy in a garden at the side of a house he was passing. Cabbage, you know, is regarded about the finest of all vegetables by goats, and in this respect Billy Whiskers was no exception to the rest of his tribe.

So when he saw the beautiful green leaves sparkling with the dew of the early morning, the temptation was more than he could resist.

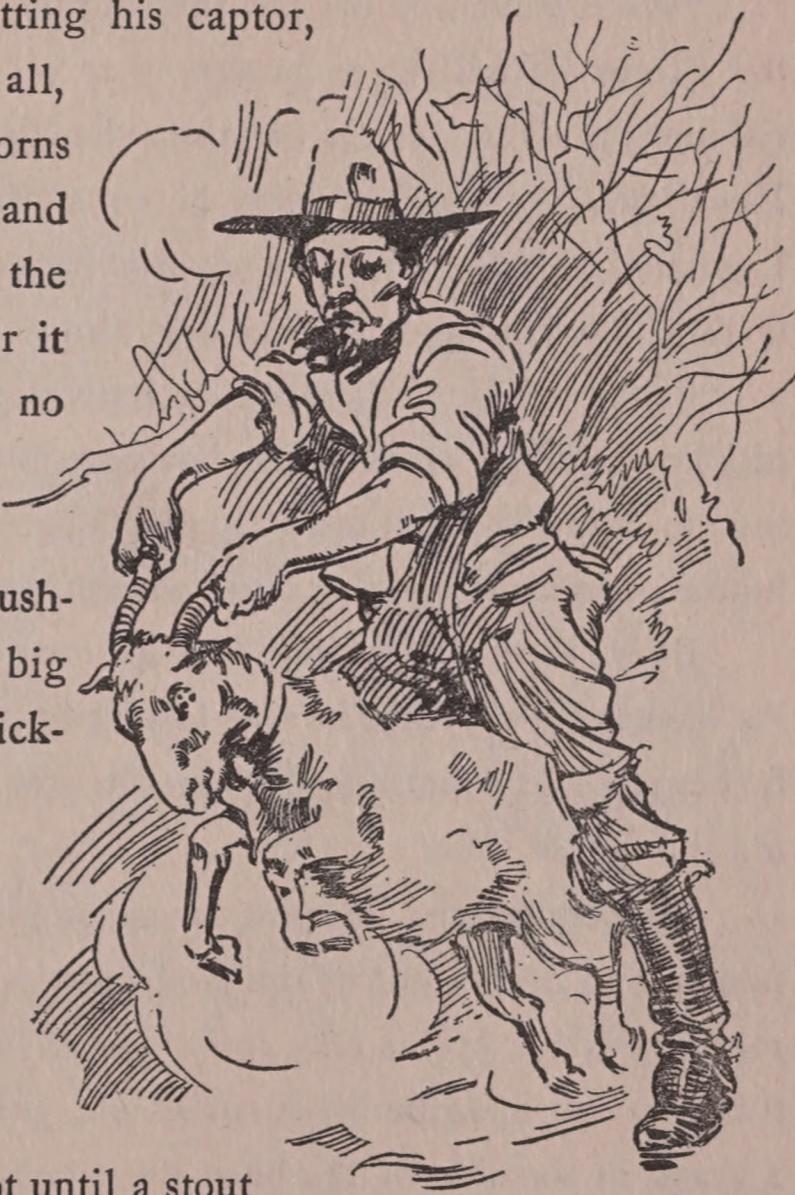
He was eating away at a great rate, having, as he afterward declared, the time of his life, when, without warning sound, he was startled nearly out of his wits by the feel of heavy hands suddenly laying hold of his horns. A voice that sounded to him like the crack of doom, (that is what he called it when he told the story to his grand children many years later) called out:—

“I’ve got you this time, my beauty, and I’ll be blest if I don’t keep you! You’ll pay well for stealing in my garden. Come here, Lige, and help me lock this goat in the barn. He’s the biggest one I’ve ever seen and I can’t handle him alone. Hurry up! He’s getting ugly.”

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Billy was certainly becoming as ugly as he could under the circumstances, but there was very little chance for him to use his great strength, and as for butting his captor, Farmer Grant, none at all, for he had both Billy's horns in his powerful hands and was rubbing his nose in the cabbage or dirt, wherever it happened to strike, with no let-up. With the aid of the hired man called Lige, Billy was finally pushed and pulled inside the big barn door, which was quickly shut and securely locked.

Even then Billy would have made things lively but his horns were still held in that horrible grip, and not until a stout strap was buckled about his neck and he was tied by a strong rope to a wagon wheel did the farmer let go, jumping out of harm's way at



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the same instant, for he already felt no little respect for those long sharp horns and Billy's strong neck.

"We'll leave him for the day, and by the time we are back from the Circus he will be so hungry that we can manage him without risking our lives. He is certainly the biggest and handsomest goat I ever saw. I wonder where he comes from. You don't suppose, Lige, that he belongs to the show and has run away? At any rate, he is mine now and anybody who gets him will have to pay well."

Farmer Grant talked on at a great rate as he and Lige were hitching the span of handsome bay colts to the family surrey preparatory to going to Springfield for the day. They then went into the house for breakfast, and at eight o'clock the whole family had started.

Billy, in the meantime, had been resting and laying his plans. As soon as he saw that he was fastened by a rope instead of a chain he began to be hopeful and his spirits rose, though he greatly regretted the loss of time.

He commenced chewing away at his tether before the Grant family had driven out of the front gate and never stopped until the rope fell apart. This took fully half an hour. While he was doing this, you can imagine his surprise and guilty fear at seeing through a crack in the side of the barn the whole Treat family driving by. He hadn't expected that they were going to the Circus—hadn't wanted them to, in fact, for he knew that he would have to keep

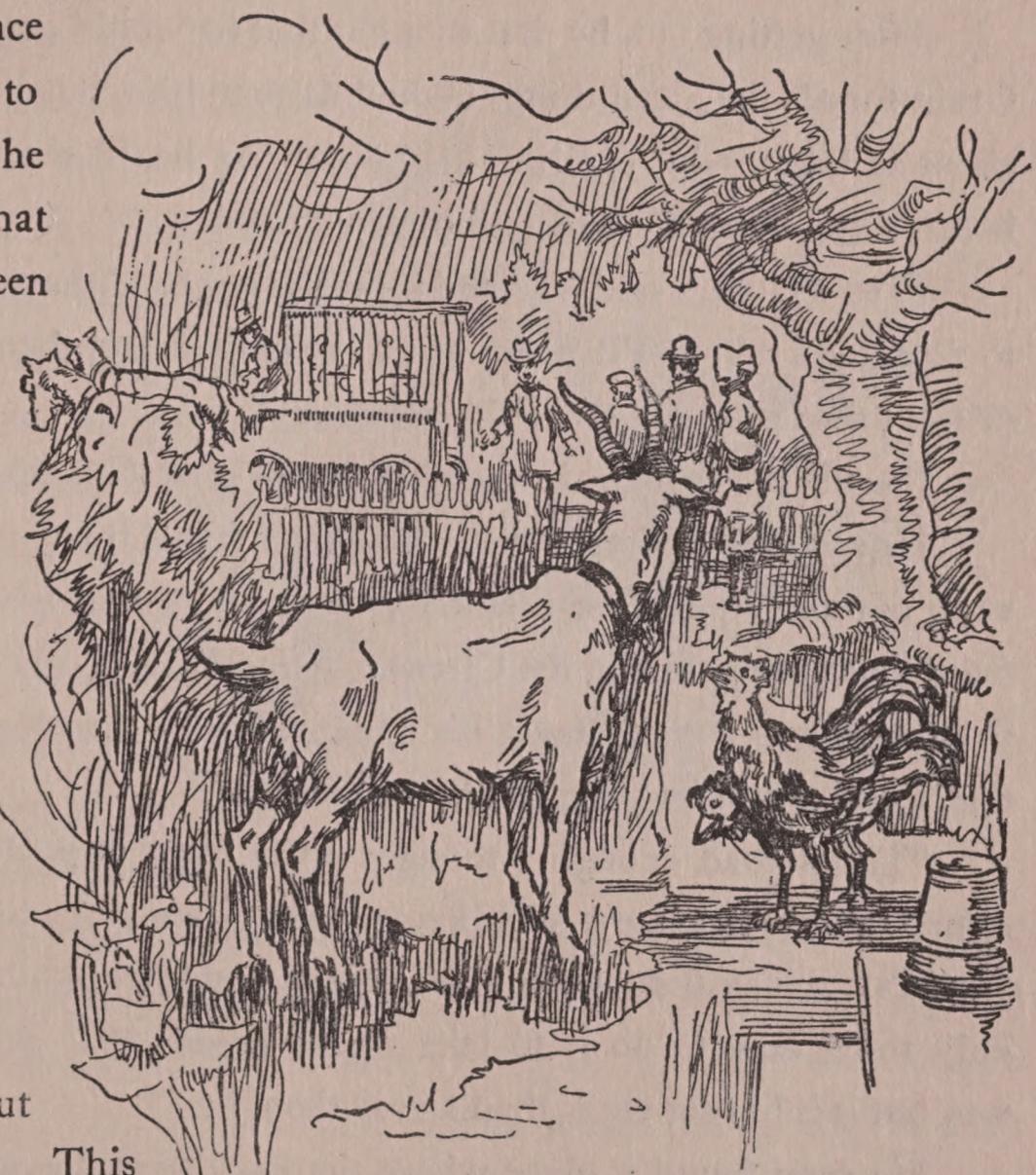
Billy Whiskers at the Circus

dodging them if they were there, and he more than suspected that there would be excitement quite enough without this added anxiety.

But since they were to be present, he was glad that he had seen them for he would now be on his guard.

After cutting the rope that held him with his sharp teeth, the next thing was to get out of the barn. This

was no easy matter, and Billy had about decided that it would be necessary to butt right through the side of it when he discovered a



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

small door fastened on the inside by a wooden latch. By raising the latch with one horn he was able to release and so open the door.

After getting out, he first thought that he would pay off Farmer Grant for all the mean things he had done to him, but just as he was about to begin with spoiling his garden, he heard the clock in the house begin to strike and so stopped to count.

"Ten o'clock," said he, "and six miles to go. I haven't time now to do a good job, so I'll wait until I come back and then I'll fix him or my name is no longer Billy Whiskers."

Poor Billy, little he knew what was in store for him!

He soon found that he could no longer travel in the road. There were too many people constantly passing, all going toward Springfield, doubtless to attend the Circus. Almost everybody either called to him, passed comments on his appearance, or wondered where so fine a goat could be going all by himself.

"This is bad enough," thought Billy, "but it will be worse if somebody overtakes me who knows who I am. As like as not he would try to capture me and then my fun would be spoiled. No, the only thing now to do is to take to the fields. I'll get there some way but it is harder work than I ever thought."

He soon found a place where the bars were down, and turned aside into the fields.

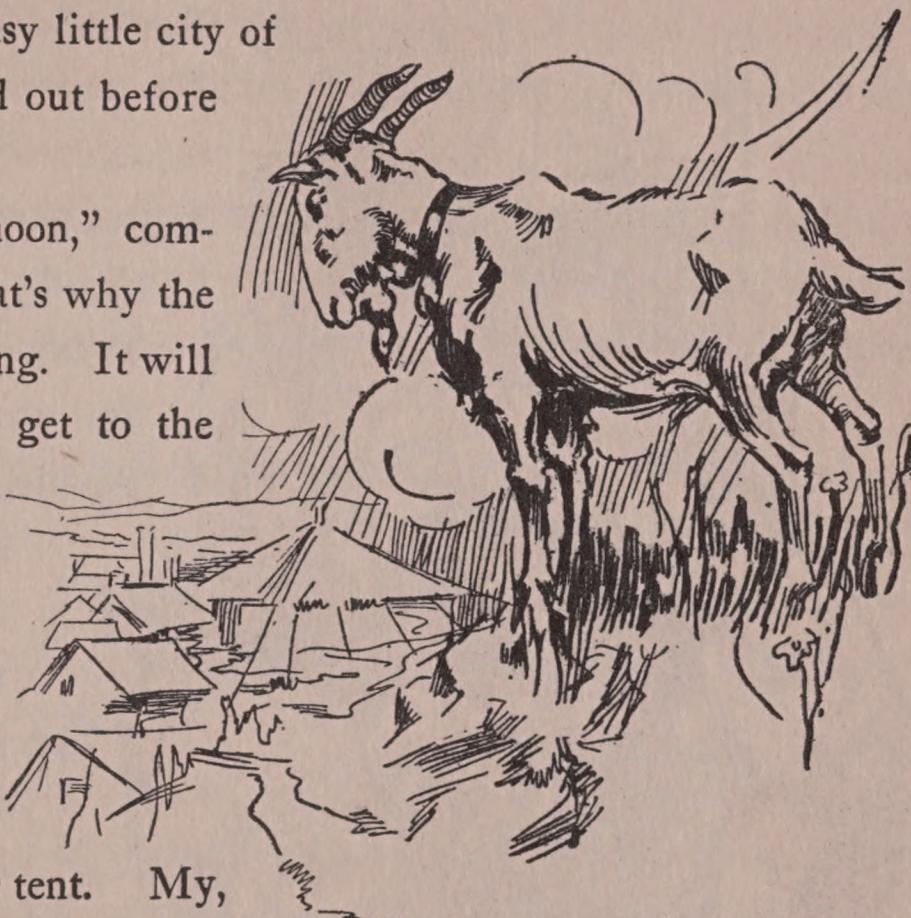
Following along as near to the road as he dared, he made pretty

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

fair progress. Presently he heard whistles begin to blow, and coming to the top of the hill he was climbing, looked down on the other side to find the busy little city of Springfield spread out before him.

"It must be noon," commented Billy, "that's why the whistles are blowing. It will keep me busy to get to the show by the time the performances begin. The bills said one o'clock sharp. Way off there to the south is the big tent. My, ain't it a whopper! I don't know how I shall ever get in, but I must manage it somehow, and I'm glad I've come. If only Terrence Bull Pup hadn't been so snippy, I would have had no trouble and might have seen the whole thing. As it is, I've missed the parade. I wish now that I hadn't stopped to eat that cabbage."

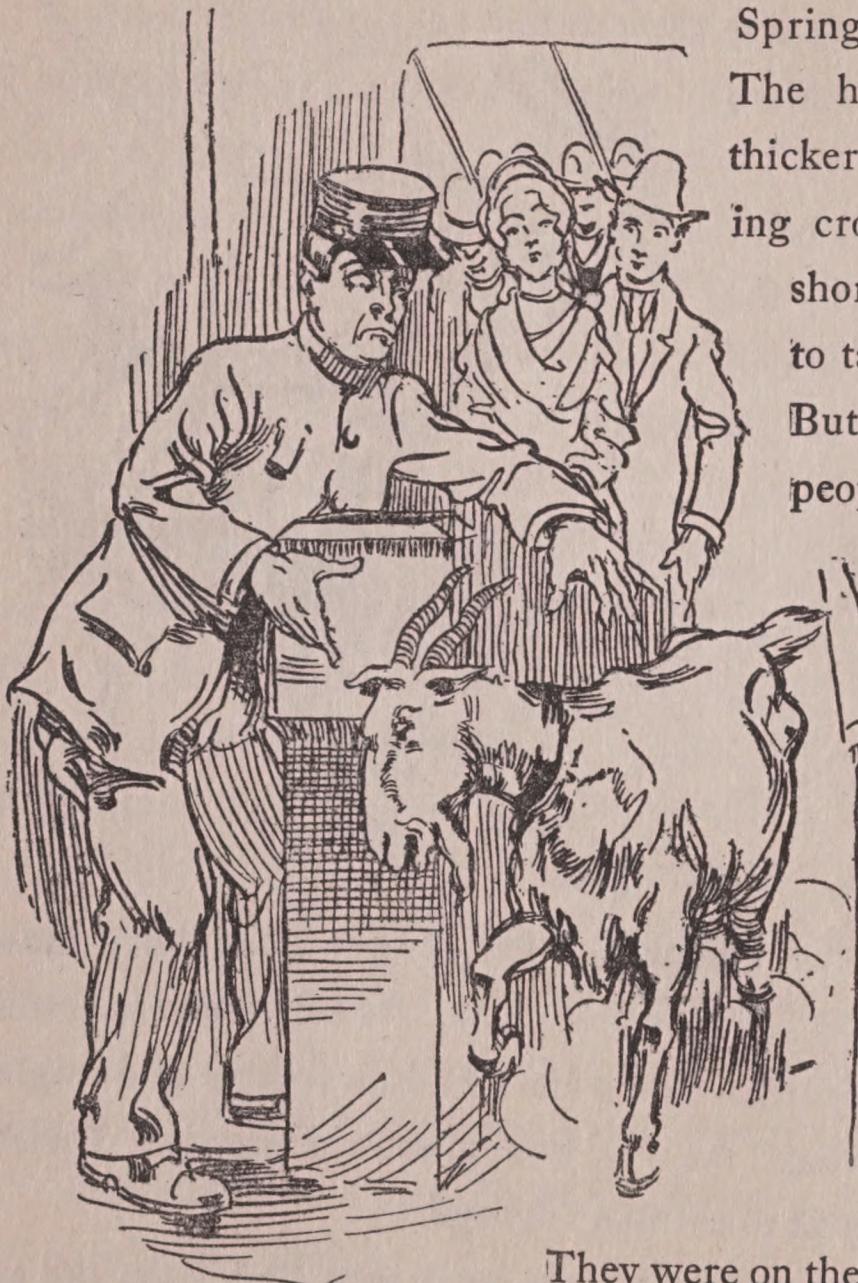
"I hope I see Terrence. If I do, he'll soon find I am not so good yet as to pass over his slights without notice. I can just feel



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

myself giving him such a butting as he has never had before."

All this time Billy was trotting down the long hill that leads into Springfield from the west. The houses were becoming thicker and difficulties in going cross-lots increasing. He shortly found it necessary to take to the open streets. But there were so many people, and so much excitement and confusion that Billy was a little out of patience to find that no attention was paid to him.



Even the boys, who had generally made him trouble in the old days, now let him alone.

They were on their way home from seeing the parade where there had been elephants, and camels, and bears,

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

and lions and tigers on view. What was a goat, even as big and proud and handsome as Billy Whiskers, to sights like these?

Besides all that, most of them were going back to see the performance as soon as they had had their dinners. No, they had no time for goats now!

Little they guessed how much of that day's excitement and fun would be due to the great goat they were meeting so carelessly in the street. If they had, you may be sure they would have looked at him twice.

At length Billy Whiskers found himself before the great tent. People were beginning to crowd in. There were hundreds and thousands of them. The day was hot and the dust stifling. There was an awful racket and Billy had all he could do to keep from being trodden under foot.

As he waited, he wondered what he was to do next and almost wished that he was safely with his dear friends at Cloverleaf Farm. Finally he made up his mind that as there was no one likely to offer him a ticket, the only way for him to get inside was to go. So he made a rush for it right through the opening in the side of the tent, past the ticket takers, who made a grab at him.

“Never touched me!” shouted Billy. Then he raised his head to find himself surrounded by such sights as he had never even dreamed of.

CHAPTER V

GOING THE ROUNDS

DY stars!" said Billy, as he cast a frightened look around, "I don't wonder now that my friend Bob ran for his life and hid under the barn when he saw animals like these coming toward him. I'd run too if I could, but I can't now. If all these people feel safe and can have a good time, I guess I can take care of myself."

Having in a great measure collected his wits by this time, and his heart no longer beating so that he could scarcely breathe, the result of the excitement of rushing past the ticket takers, he made a more careful survey of his surroundings and quickly decided on his course of action.

He saw that he was in the section of the great tent devoted to the wild animals and freaks. As all readers know just how the cages are placed around the sides of the tent, with the elephants and camels in the middle; and how the human skeleton, the fat lady, bearded woman, hairy man, dwarf, giant and such like freaks are seated on a raised and rickety platform not far from the elephants, we will not stop to describe the scene that now presented itself to Billy Whiskers' wondering gaze. It looked grand to him and he was just as excited

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as boys and girls are when they find themselves inside the great tent with all its wonders spread out before them.

"I'll first call on the animals and make friends with those that look pleasant and answer good-naturedly the few questions which I want to ask," thought Billy. "Then I will go in and see the Circus that the billboards at The Corners had so much to say about, and especially the clown who makes Tom and Harry Treat laugh so that they can never mention him without almost splitting themselves. I didn't like all the things they said about him. If he makes those poor horses race too fast and strikes people with that board of his that cracks so, I shall be tempted to give him a dose of his own medicine. I am not so meek yet, in spite of what Terrence Bull Pup is pleased to say, that I can stand it to see horses abused or innocent actors hurt by an outlandish looking clown."





"QUIT THAT!" SHOUTED BILLY.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

What really happened to the clown, owing to Billy, we shall hear a little later.

So with only the thought to bother him that some member of the Treat family might spy him and take him out for safe-keeping before he had seen all the sights, Billy started right in at the cage nearest to hand. As for the Treats, he knew that there was nothing to do but take his chances and that they were pretty good considering the great size of the tent and the thousands of people in it.

As he approached the cage in question, a big one, he discovered that it contained six or eight animals about the size of his friend Bob, the dog at Cloverleaf, though not nearly so pleasant to look at.

"Indeed," thought Billy to himself, "I'm glad that crowd are where they can't get at me. I don't like their looks. I'll just see who they are and pass along."

This was easier said than done for every one of the group of prisoners was restlessly pacing up and down, evidently looking for some way to get out.

It was a minute or two before Billy was able to catch the eye of one of them for they seemed to never look at anyone, afraid to, in fact. At length the largest, who seemed bolder than the rest, caught sight of Billy Whiskers and was so surprised that he stopped short to take another look. As this was the chance Billy had been waiting for, he quickly improved it.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"How are you?" said he. "Do you mind telling me the name of your interesting and lively family? I am a stranger here and want to learn all I can. As you see, I am an animal myself and have none but the friendliest feeling for all our race."

This polite speech won for Billy an answer, as he felt sure it would.

"How do I do?" snapped the caged beast. "I'm most unhappy. We are wolves. I, myself, came from the boundless steppes of far-away Russia where I and my people for hundreds of years, have been ~~went~~ to roam wild and free and far. We are all robbers and live by plundering farmers. When quite young, I grew so bold that I was finally captured alive while eating a sheep I had killed. After endless travels over land and sea, I arrived in a dreadful place called New York, and was shortly sold to this show and put into a cage with these other wretches and ever since we have been a spectacle to crowds of people day after day. I have no words with which to tell you, sir goat, how we hate this life."

The snarl with which he said these last words was so fierce that it made Billy fairly shiver.

Without waiting for a reply, the big wolf went on:

"My companions are no less unhappy than I am, though there is little in common between us as we have been collected from all over. There is no quarter of the globe in which branches of our

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

family do not exist. We never stop trying to find a way to get out, and if we ever do, we will make some of these cruel people who



have come here to look at us with never a thought of pity for our forlorn condition, wish they had stayed at home. There is that little rosy-cheeked, brown-eyed boy with his mother. He's about three years old, I guess, just the right age to be tender eating. How I'd like to get my jaws into his throat!"

The old wolf smiled wickedly as he said it.

Billy looked to see whom he meant, and to his horror saw his own little Dick holding fast to his mother's hand. They had passed

within a few feet of Billy, but had not seen him. He was thankful

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for that because he felt that he could never look a member of the Treat family in the face again if he had been caught hobnobbing with the great Russian wolf, especially if it ever leaked out what the wolf had said.

Billy's nerves were so shaken and he felt so sick after hearing the dreadful threats the wolf had made that he crept between the wheels under the cage and lay down behind the wooden side of the cage which was banked against the far wheels. Here he had time to recover his composure in peace and pull himself together.

It was not long, of course, before Billy felt well enough to go on.

Strange to tell, the more he thought of the old wolf's story, the less he blamed him for being so savage. He realized that in picking out little Dick as the one on whom he would like to wreak his vengeance, he had not known that he was Billy's dearest friend and that Billy had once risked his own life to save him from drowning in the old swimming hole, and was more than willing to do so again if the necessity ever arose. Finally Billy owned to himself if he had been treated as the wolf had been, captured, taken far from home, penned up in a narrow cage to be looked at by thousands of people day after day, year in and year out, with not the faintest hope or chance of escape, he would feel the same way. The very thought of such a fate made him quake and wish he had stayed at home.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Billy crept out of his hiding-place and slipped quietly past the next three or four cages without stopping to ask any questions, fearing that the wolves would see him and make an uproar trying to call him back to hear more of their sad story and to persuade him to find some means for their escape. Billy was always tender-hearted when it came to the cases of those in trouble and suffering, and he knew it would hurt his feelings to be obliged to disappoint even that pack of wolves, thieves and robbers though he knew them to be.

By just glancing sidewise at the cages he thus passed and observing the labels on each he was able to learn the names of the animals he felt obliged to skip. They were the North American panther or mountain lion, red deer, wild boar, and hyenas. The last were such ugly, awkward, unclean and altogether terrifying looking beasts that Billy did not mind not making their personal acquaintance, though he would have liked to exchange greetings with the beautiful, mild-looking, gentle-acting deer; and to have put a question or two to the mountain lion about his diet. He was crouched in one corner of his cage and looked for all the world as though he were ready to spring upon some victim.

The cage before which Billy now stopped was marked in big gilt letters:

AFRICAN LION, KING OF BEASTS.

Somehow this did not please Billy Whiskers. Though he would

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

not have admitted it, down deep in his heart he thought that he himself was probably the king of beasts, and it did not suit him to see that another was thus publicly given this proud title.

"I'll stop and see what he looks like," thought Billy. "I don't believe he is so much after all. If I get the chance I'll make him feel small enough."

All this time Billy had not been able to see the lion on account of the crowd of people before his cage. At last he squeezed to the front row and took his first look. That alone would have been quite enough to convince Billy that he was justly entitled to be called king of beasts, but other proof was not lacking, for as soon as the great, shaggy-headed lion saw a goat was gazing at him he was so surprised that he let out a terrific roar.

Even the people were startled and shrank back. As for Billy, he would certainly have keeled over in a fit of fright had not the legs of the on-lookers crowded against his sides so tight that he was held up in spite of himself. His giddiness passed away in a minute



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or two, but came near overcoming him a second time when he perceived that the great lion was addressing his remarks to him.

In telling the story afterward, Billy could never remember exactly what was said, he was so rattled at the time.

In spite of the lion's great voice and savage appearance, Billy was surprised to find that his remarks were not unkind so far as he was personally concerned, but perfectly shocking about his captivity, the sort of life he was obliged to live, the dead meat he had to eat, the people who looked at him and never once remembered the suffering he daily endured.

"Little goat," roared the lion, "I wish I could change places with you. Though I am called king of beasts, I would gladly give the title and all that goes with it to any free member of the animal kingdom, little or big, who will exchange his freedom with my captivity. I came from over the sea. My home is in the wild African desert where for ages my ancestors have reigned supreme. Boundless was our kingdom and no one there dared to oppose our will. My food I got by strength, and stealth, and cunning. Like all my race, I scorned to eat that which any other had killed. All went well with me and mine until a strange terror crept over the length and breadth of our wide domain. I heard the story, and laughed, when I heard it, that black men from the coast country were coming to the desert to capture the lions, that they had been bidden to do

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

this by the king of the Belgians who in some way had cast an evil spell over them so that they had no choice but to obey his will, that if they failed of success they were tortured, maimed and even put to death. It was said that we lions were valuable and could be sold for much gold and that was why we were wanted.

“But why do I tell you, little goat, all this sad story? Because I can see that while you are as afraid as death of me, you are still sorry for me and sympathize with me in my awful sufferings.

“When about a year old, large and strong for my age, I was caught in one of the cunning traps set for us. Though my case was a hopeless one from the first, when the black men came to take me, I fought as I had never fought before. Two of my captors fell, never to rise again. With a stroke of my paw I had crushed the skull of each. Others of them were frightfully mangled and wounded. But it was all of no use. I was brought to America, sold to this show, and here I have been ever since.”

The other things he said Billy Whiskers would never try even to repeat. They were too dreadful. His one hope seemed to be that he might some day break out of his cage when a great crowd of people were before it, spring upon them and kill right and left until he should feel that he had paid off the score of all his wrongs and sufferings.

Billy tried to comfort the lion for he was truly sorry for him.

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He realized what a magnificent beast he was and what a wretched life it must be shut up all the time in one little cage. He told him, however, that it would be wrong for him to visit his wrath on the innocent people who came to admire him if he ever succeeded in breaking out, but that he would be justified in dealing with the wicked king of the Belgians as he saw fit if he were ever able to get his claws on him.

Billy then sadly said farewell, for although all this conversation had taken place in the animal language in much less time than it takes to tell it, he now felt that he must hasten on as there was still much to see and hear.

Turning about, Billy discovered that the cage of the big African lion was just opposite the place, near the centre of the tent, where the elephants were stationed. So Billy went to look at them, hoping for more cheerful things than the stories of the wolf and lion.

What he found the next chapter will tell.

CHAPTER VI

THE ELEPHANT'S TRUNK

HERE was even a larger crowd standing around the elephants than in front of the lions' cage. It took Billy a minute or two to wiggle his way through. While he was doing this as quietly and gently as he could, for you can well believe that he was on his good behavior, a little thing happened that came near upsetting all his calculations and bringing to an untimely end the adventures of this red letter day at the Circus.

Without in the least intending it, he brushed against the skirts of a young lady who with her best beau was taking in the sights. She glanced down to see what the trouble was and, of course, discovered our Billy. Not knowing him and being very much excited anyway, she jumped to the conclusion that one of the wild beasts had escaped and that she was about to be eaten alive. But instead of running as you or I would have done, she shut her eyes and gave a little squeal and then tumbled over.

Billy knew that no serious harm had been done and so, instead of stopping to lend a helping hand, he took advantage of the commotion to forge ahead and very soon found himself standing close to the head of the biggest of all the elephants.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Some of my readers know how funny it feels to be right close up to one of these great beasts. Billy felt the same way, only more so. He didn't dare to move for fear of attracting attention. The thought passed through his mind that, big as he was, he would not make more than five or six bites for the monster. He remembered again the story that Bob had told him of the way he ran and hid when he saw the elephant marching toward him. He no longer despised Bob for this and only wished he could do the same thing.

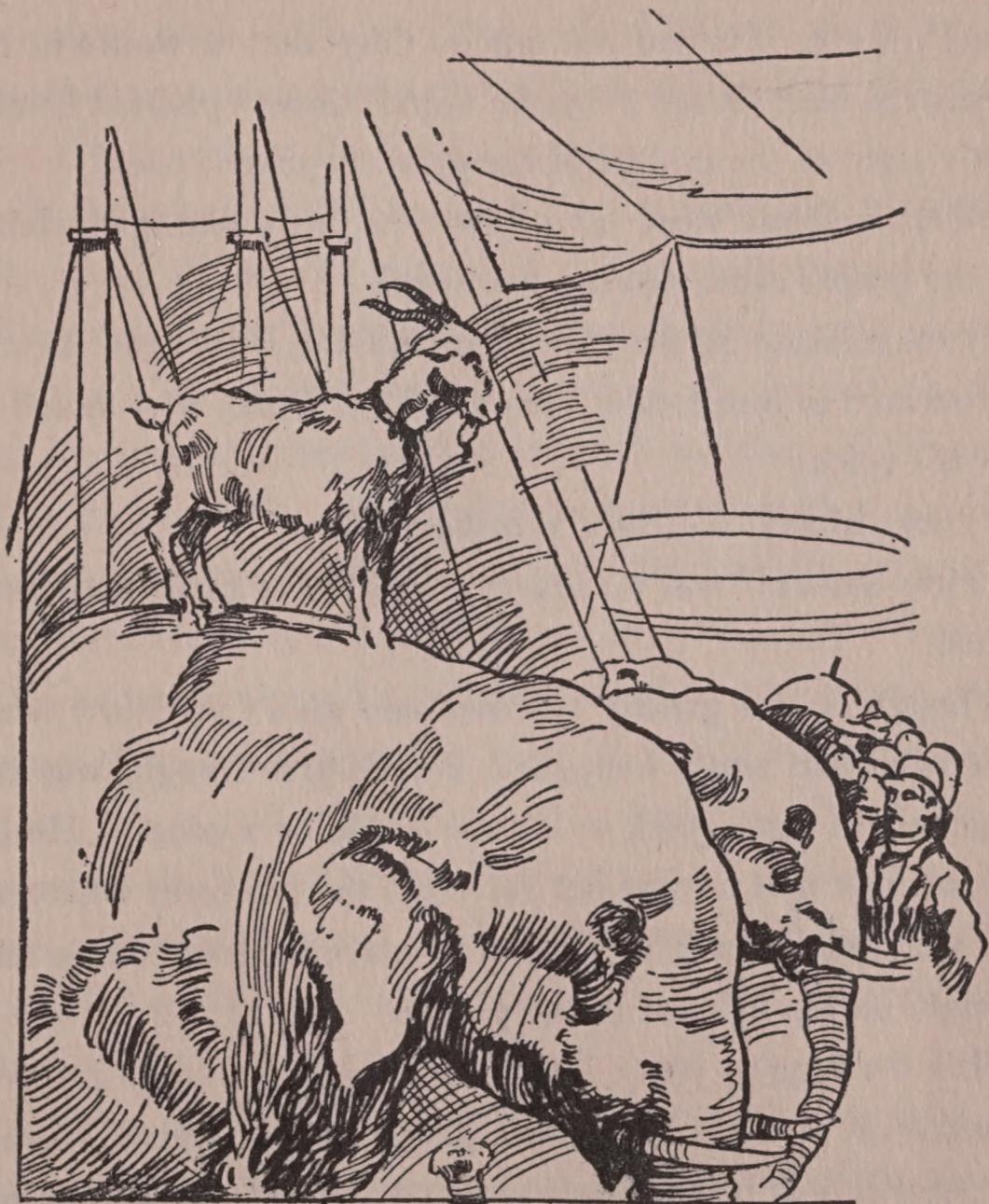
But bye and bye, as nothing seemed to happen, he began to feel better and to take notice. Then it was that he first discovered the elephant's great trunk.

"I declare," said Billy to himself, "that must be his hitching strap, and he is loose too, I believe that I will hold on to it till his keeper comes. That will make me all solid with him. There is nothing like standing in with the management. Perhaps he will give me something to eat for I am getting awfully hungry. I hadn't thought of it before but I am. There has been so much going on all day that I have quite neglected my health. I'll be sick tomorrow when I get home if I am not careful, and then Polly Parrot, as likely as not, will spread the story all over Cloverleaf Farm that I have been off on a spree. She is mean enough to do anything, that bird is!"

By this time Billy had advanced to the place where the end of the elephant's trunk was dragging on the ground and quick as scat he had planted his two feet on it.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Poor Billy, he little knew what that bit of mistaken kindness was to cost him.



To his utter amazement and horror the supposed hitching strap

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

began to curl up and before he knew what was happening, the big elephant had him tight around the waist and he was sailing up through the air. He had just time to think that he would be dashed to pieces the next second when he found himself planted firmly and securely right in the middle of the great elephant's back.

What a shout went up! How the boys and girls laughed! How the people came rushing that way!

In the midst of all the excitement and din, Billy heard first of all, and it seemed to him louder than all, Tom Treat, who yelled at the top of his voice:

“Look, Harry, it’s Billy Whiskers!”

“Holy smoke!” was all Harry could say in reply, he was so astonished.

Though he was greatly confused and didn’t yet know where he was or what had really happened, Billy’s first thought was that he must get out of sight quick or that he would be a goner. He looked about and saw that he was not far from the platform where all the freaks were, and that it was the only place he could jump and not light right on top of some of the people.

“It’s the biggest jump I’ve ever tried but I have got to do it now and trust to luck. If I once get to that platform, I can scoot to the other side of it, drop down behind and hide till all the hubbub blows over. Here goes!”

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

With that he suddenly pulled himself together in a sort of a bunch and shot straight out into the air right over the heads of a lot of astonished people. Tom Treat, when telling his chum, Jack Wright, about it next day, said that Billy could not have gone further or faster if he had been fired out of a gun.

Billy imagined that if he were able to reach the platform his troubles would all be over, but in this he was sadly mistaken.

When the freaks, the human skeleton, the hairy man from Borneo, the giant, the dwarf, the fat lady and all the rest discovered Billy on the elephant, they laughed fit to kill and clapped their hands, but when they saw him coming right at them through the air like a cannon ball, they were scared enough. The fat lady, who thought that he must surely hit her, tried to get out of the way all of a sudden. Of course she could hardly move when she wasn't excited. In trying to be quick about it now, she only succeeded in upsetting her chair and tumbling over backwards. Down she went right through the floor of the flimsy old platform, nearly scraping her sides off. Her sudden upset made all the boards of the floor fly up, throwing the rest of the freaks every which way, all more or less in a heap.

On top of them all landed Billy Whiskers. Of course he wasn't hurt, and, as good luck would have it, none of the others were, not even the fat lady seriously, though she had hysterics and cried and

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

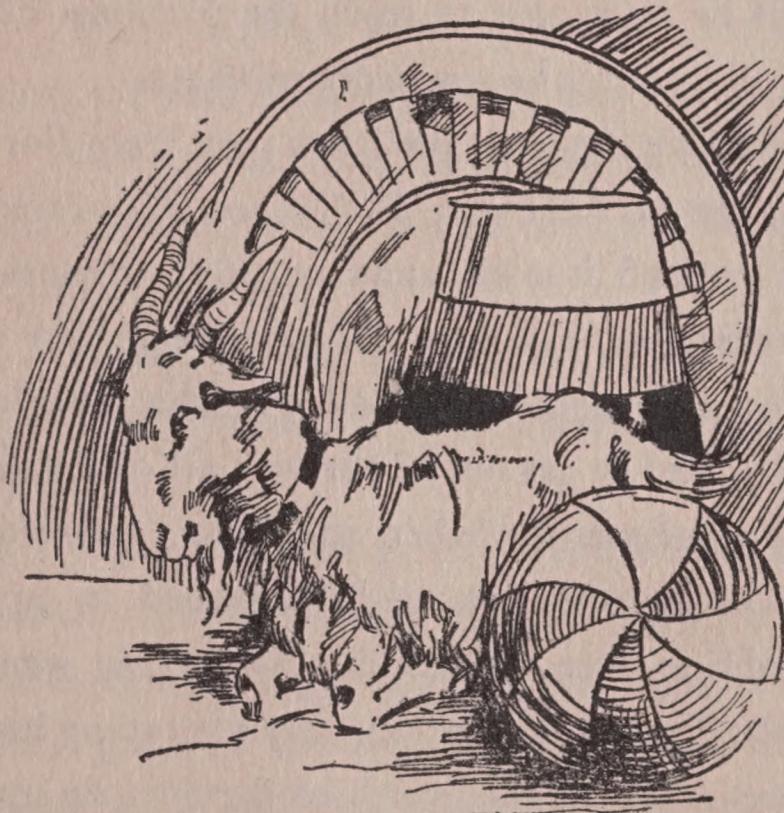
laughed by turns and threw her fat arms, which looked like bologna sausages, wildly about and kept calling on the giant to protect her. This was after Billy Whiskers, the unwilling cause of all the commotion, had pulled himself safely out of the wreck and had hidden completely out of sight in a big empty box which he had luckily found

on the other side, and quite near the scene of the great catastrophe.

"I'll slip in here and wait till things quiet down a bit," thought Billy. "If I try to get out now the whole crowd will be after me. Where there is so much excitement and so many things to see, a little commotion like this

doesn't last long."

It was while he was waiting for things to subside that he saw and heard the queer antics of the fat lady after they had pulled her out of the hole she had made in the platform. It seemed to the watching and listening Billy that she was more mad than hurt.





"I'LL GIVE YOU THIS PONY, HARNESS AND WAGON IF YOU'LL LET ME
HAVE BILLY."

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"Where is that horrid goat?" she screamed. "I want to sit down on him just once for luck. I'll teach him to jump at folks like that! There won't be a grease spot left when I get through with him. Why don't some of you bring him to me?"

Then she began to laugh and cry and toss her fat arms about. All of a sudden she stopped short.

"Come to me, Don Orsino," she said to the giant. "I'm going to faint and you must hold me."

Billy never could believe that he heard correctly what the big giant replied, but it sounded to him as though he told her to shut up and not be a fool, and that she looked like the old scratch and that she had better look out or she'd lose her job.

Billy was so indignant that any lady should be treated in such a manner that he came very near rushing out of his hiding-place and going for the giant, big as he was, with fire in his eye and head down.

"One punch, if he didn't see me coming, would knock him off his perch and teach him some manners. I'll try it."

But just then Billy remembered what the fat lady had said about sitting down on him, and how there wouldn't be a grease spot left when she did, and so he thought better of his rash resolve to go to her rescue.

It is fortunate for both him and us that he reconsidered for had he not, this story would have come to a sudden and very flat ending.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Billy, safely stowed away in the big pine box, had time to think matters over and lay a few plans. Presently he began to laugh to himself the way the elephant had fixed him.

"The very idea of calling that long thing, which I now know must be his nose, a hitching strap," whispered Billy to himself. "It's enough to make a dog laugh."

You see that Billy did not even yet know that it was the elephant's trunk, but called it his nose.

"I wish the Treat boys hadn't been there," Billy went on. "They will tell everybody at Cloverleaf Farm how it all happened and Polly Parrot at least will never be through laughing at it."

Billy needn't have worried over this for it was many a day before he was to see his friends at Cloverleaf Farm again, and when he finally returned they were all so glad to see him that nobody, not even Polly Parrot, for a long time thought of making fun of him.

But I am getting away ahead of my story. There are many adventures to relate before the memorable home-coming was brought to pass.

CHAPTER VII

BILLY IN DANGER

PROM his hiding-place in the big box, Billy could look into the section of the tent where the performances were now going on, could see the clown in his outlandish dress, hear the shouts of laughter that followed his remarks, observe the bare-back riding, and watch the trapeze performers.

He had just about made up his mind that it was safe for him to start out again when he overheard some talking near at hand that caused him not only to pause, but to shrink into the smallest space he could in the darkest corner of his hiding-place.

“What are you looking for, Mike?” he heard someone say in a deep voice.

“That big goat,” was the reply. “Did you see Jumbo put him on his back? He’s a beauty. When I saw him make that flying leap among the freaks, it popped into my head that we ought to annex him to this show. He’ll sure make an attraction.”

“Do you know I thought the very same thing, and I have been looking for him too. It seems to me that he must be hidden in some of this rubbish. Have you looked in this big box?” and Mike kicked with his foot Billy’s hiding-place.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"No, I will in just a minute. But say, before we go any further let's settle it that whether you or I find the goat, we will own him equally between us. If we decide to sell him, we'll share and share alike."



"I'm agreed to that. It's my guess that it will take the two of us to handle and train him. I never saw such a jump in my born days as he made off that elephant's back. He must be as strong as an ox. We'll have to starve him down a bit, probably, before he will be manageable."

"Yes, that's right. Hurry up now and see what's in that box. The old man will be calling us in a minute."

"I'll have to go right now," thought Billy, "for I won't be captured by that precious pair of scamps if I can possibly help it. As like as not they would want to put me in a cage, and I haven't forgotten what that means if the stories of the wolf and the lion can be believed. It's awfully unlucky,

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

though, for now I am here there are a whole lot of things I want to see. The only thing for me to do is the minute one of them stoops down to look into this box, to jump at him with all my might, knock him flat, and make a bee line just as fast as I can go for the entrance. It's good-bye Circus for me," sighed Billy, and he prepared for the attack.

For once in this eventful day luck was with him. Just as the man called Mike was coming around—Billy could hear him—where he could look in at him, someone called and both his pursuers started on the double quick to get back to their posts, one saying to the other that they would try it again a little later.

"Saved again!" Billy would have shouted had he dared to make any noise, but he didn't.

"I must get out of here now as quick as ever I can for they will be back in a few minutes. When I am mixed up in the crowd, the chances are that they will not find me. Even if they do I will be in no worse fix than if caught in this old box. One thing sure, no man will ever grab me by the horns again like Farmer Grant did. With my head free I am not so easy to catch and hold."

With this he crept out of his place of concealment and was soon on the other side of the tent, gazing with all his might at the many strange animals which the different cages contained.

He stopped to talk with a number of them, but their stories were

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

all more or less like those of the wolf and the lion. Every one of them told Billy that he would be glad to exchange places with him, and not a few warned him to take care and on no account let any of the keepers capture him. Whatever else you do, they all agreed, keep out of this show for it's slavery of the very worst kind.

The royal Bengal tiger, who told Billy that his home was in the jungles of India, made him feel more thankful than any of the others that he was free and could go and come when and where he pleased. The things which the tiger said were something awful, and the savage way he said them made his listener tremble from head to foot. He felt a special spite, it seemed, against a keeper named Mike, whom he said he would eat alive without a grain of salt if ever he got hold of him.

Billy was sure from the name that this Mike was one of the two men who had come so near finding him, and he was more glad than before that he had escaped when he learned what a cruel master he was.

It would be very interesting to describe all the animals Billy Whiskers saw and tell their stories, but it would take too long and doubtless the readers of Billy Whiskers' life and adventures know about them already. If not, they can all be found in the Natural History books in the library.

The bears, probably, interested Billy as much, if not more, than

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

any of the rest. They were very good-natured, especially the young ones, and seemed very glad to make his acquaintance.

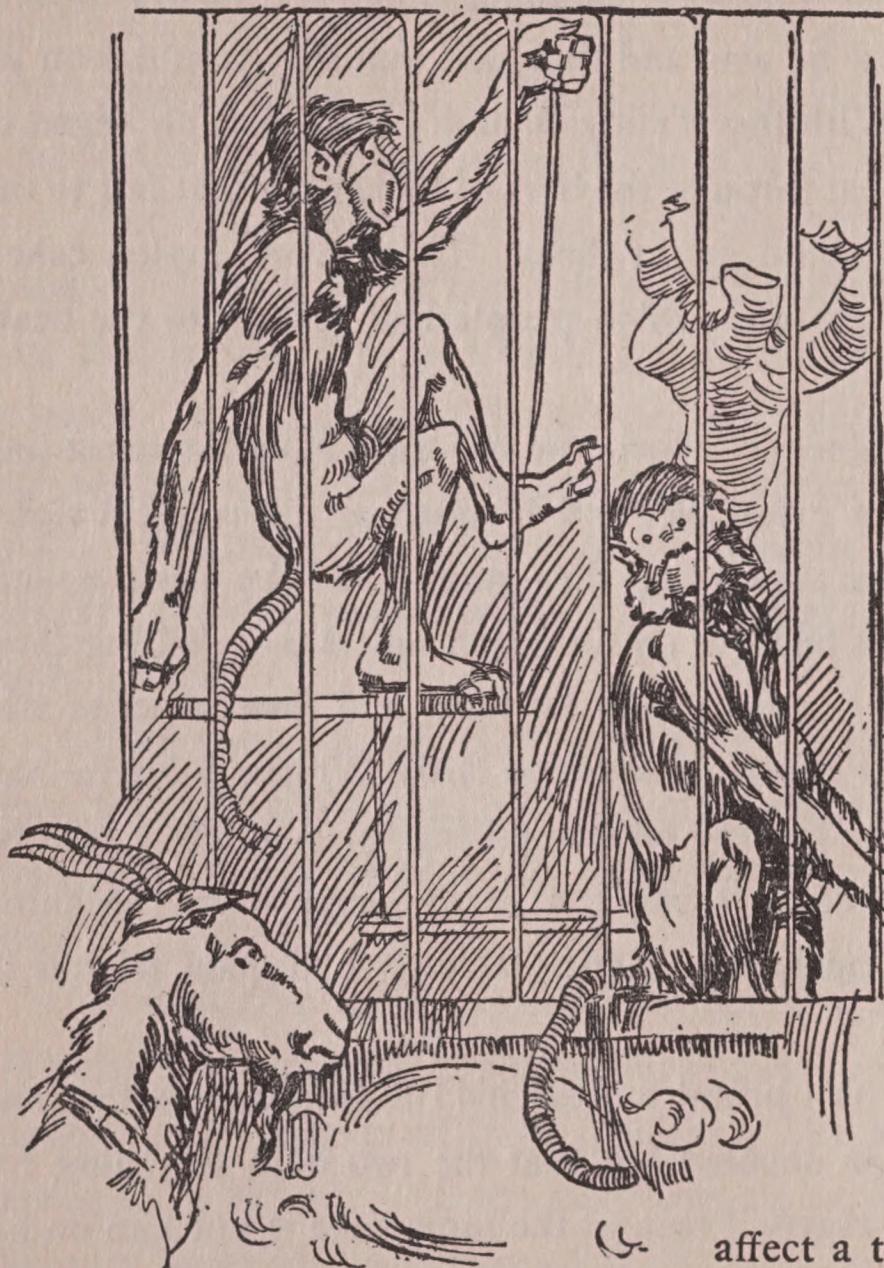
Billy, who by this time was beginning to be very hungry indeed, told them how hollow he was, and they said that they would soon fix him up all right. With that Teddy B. and Teddy G. both began to push good things to eat through the bars of their cage that fell to the ground where Billy could get at them. There were apples, cakes, peanuts and other rich food which people had thrown to the bears in great abundance.

The crowd of onlookers when they saw the Teddy Bears feeding the goat thought it a great joke and laughed at the comical sight. Billy could hear them saying that they guessed that he was the same goat the big elephant had put on his back; others were telling their friends how he had jumped at the fat lady, and then someone said that he believed that his name must be Billy Whiskers for he had heard a couple of fine-looking boys inquiring for a runaway goat by that name. And so it came to pass that many people were beginning to talk about him, and he felt that he already had good friends in the crowd.

While it made him proud to hear his little masters called fine-looking, for he never doubted but that the two boys searching for him were Tom and Harry Treat, at the same time it put him on his guard, for after going through so much to see the Circus, he didn't propose to be stopped yet awhile.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

If he had only known what was in store for him later, he would have been glad enough to quit then and there.



"I'll just take a look at the monkeys and then go in and watch the performers," resolved Billy. "It won't do not to have a good look at them, for ever since old Mr. Coon told me his story I have been most anxious to see what monkeys look like. I expect they are dreadful or the remembrance of them could not

the Coon as it does."

← affect a tough old sinner like

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

The monkeys' cage was very large, and was fitted up with all sorts of contrivances for exercise. There were a dozen or more monkeys of all sorts and sizes in it, and they were always one of the greatest attractions of the whole show and the crowds of people in front of it were enormous.

Billy had no difficulty in locating it and was very soon watching the antics of the monkeys with interest. He decided that they were the strangest looking animals and about the most ugly he had ever seen, but he couldn't make up his mind why it was the Coon had seemed to hate them so much and at the same time to be so afraid of them.

He would learn pretty soon.

Like everybody else, Billy soon found himself laughing with all his might at the funny things the monkeys were doing. They never seemed to stop for a minute, and around and around they went, always cutting up some new caper, doing something that nobody expected.

"The looks of that old blue-nosed Mandrill is surely enough to make a dog laugh," said giggling Billy, using his favorite expression.

Just about this time, two or three of the monkeys spied Billy looking and laughing.

"It's that goat," said one, "who made such a smash-up in the

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

freak depot when he jumped off the elephant's back. I haven't laughed so hard in a month of Sundays. I wonder if we can't make his acquaintance. I think anybody who can tip over that fat lady is worth knowing. Ask him, Colonel Mandrill, to come up closer where we can talk to him."

And so Colonel Mandrill did as he was requested and politely invited Billy to draw near.

At first Billy was shy, but he could see no possible danger, and the whole group looked so good-natured and jolly that with only a moment's delay he stepped quite close to the door of the cage where the space between the wires was a little greater than elsewhere.

The monkeys began by asking all about who he was, where he came from, scarcely giving him any chance to reply. Then they told him, all talking at once, how pleased they were that he had made such a confusion among the freaks and how tickled they had been to see the fat lady, who it seems never had a pleasant word for any of them, going through the floor.

They began now in whispers to ask Billy if he could not get them out of their cage and to tell him how everlasting sick they were of being shut up.

Billy drew nearer so that he could hear better and just started explaining how impossible it was for him to do anything for them when, without warning and as quick as a flash, the old blue-faced

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Mandrill monkey or baboon reached out a long gray arm and grabbed Billy firmly by his proud whiskers.

“You’ll either get us out of here or we’ll pull you in,” said he.

CHAPTER VIII

CHOSEN LEADER

UIT that," shouted Billy, as he pulled and jerked, trying to break away from the grip that held him fast.

"No, you don't," said old Blue Nose. "I've got you now and I say to you again, either you get us out of here or in you come if I have to pull you to pieces."

"Give me time to think a minute," replied Billy, supposing that someone would come to his rescue when it was seen what a tight box he was in.

But the crowd only laughed, not perceiving how serious the situation really was and regarding it a great joke that the sly old monkey had succeeded in capturing so neatly the now famous goat. It happened that none of the keepers were near at the time or they would have known by past experience that Billy Whiskers was now in great danger of his life.

"I'll give you just one minute to make up your mind whether or not you care to accept my terms," now replied Billy's terrible captor. "If you free us from our prison, we will make you our leader and follow you wherever you go," went on the monkey.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"I don't want to be your leader, dear Colonel Mandrill. I am not fitted for so distinguished an honor."

It was all that Billy could do to make this polite speech. His voice, in spite of his best effort to control it, shook as though he were having a chill.

"You waste good time in talking such nonsense. In half a minute more you will begin to come between the bars of this cage. By the time you are all in, you'll look as flat as a pancake for the space is narrow, but I am strong." With that heartless remark he gave Billy's head a jerk that seemed as though it would break his neck.

Billy Whiskers took a look at the monkey, saw that the thin gaunt arm which held him was all muscle, as strong as steel. In a flash it came to him why the old Coon who lived in the big chestnut at home held the whole monkey tribe in such dread.

"My only chance," thought Billy, is to break away from him, even if I lose all my whiskers in doing it."

With that, he began to pull back with all his might, throwing his head up and down, right and left. The strain on his long beard was more painful than having teeth pulled out, but there was no help for it. He squirmed and wiggled and twisted. It all did no good. The strong hand and arm that held him never relaxed. The long, white, luxuriant beard, once Billy's pride and joy but now his greatest enemy, did not give way.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

He felt that his head was being pulled nearer and nearer the fatal bars. Now his nose touched the iron, and his fore feet were no longer on the ground. Billy closed his eyes, throwing his head up once more, not in the hope of breaking loose—he had given that up—but in utter despair. It saved him. In some way, Billy could never afterward explain how, one of his horns caught under the pin with which the door was fastened and as he raised his head for the last time this pin was dislodged and fell to the ground.

Billy's captor was braced against the door at the time, the better to drag him in, so that when the fastening gave way the door flew open in a hurry and out popped the blue-nosed Mandrill, followed closely by all the other monkeys.

Billy now tried, of course, to get away for he had quite enough of the monkey tribe by this time, but they wouldn't have it that way. In two seconds they were all around him. Billy Whiskers had set them free and it was plain to be seen that he was the one of all others to tie to now.

As soon as the monkeys came piling out of their cage, the people who were looking on scattered right and left. They made a great commotion but nobody paid much attention. This clearing of the space gave just the opportunity that was wanted to organize and make a few plans. It took far less time than it does to tell it. In a minute the decision had been reached to give *the* performance of

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

the afternoon, and so they moved, in a compact body with Billy Whiskers in the center, toward the great ring, everybody getting quickly out of their way without being asked.

At the sudden and unexpected appearance of Billy Whiskers and the monkeys in the midst of the great amphitheatre, packed with people, a great shout went up. Such a welcome was never given the most skilled performer or even to the most popular clown.

The reception tendered to the newcomers by the performers and clown who were busy at the time of their coming with their different parts was in marked contrast to that of the audience.

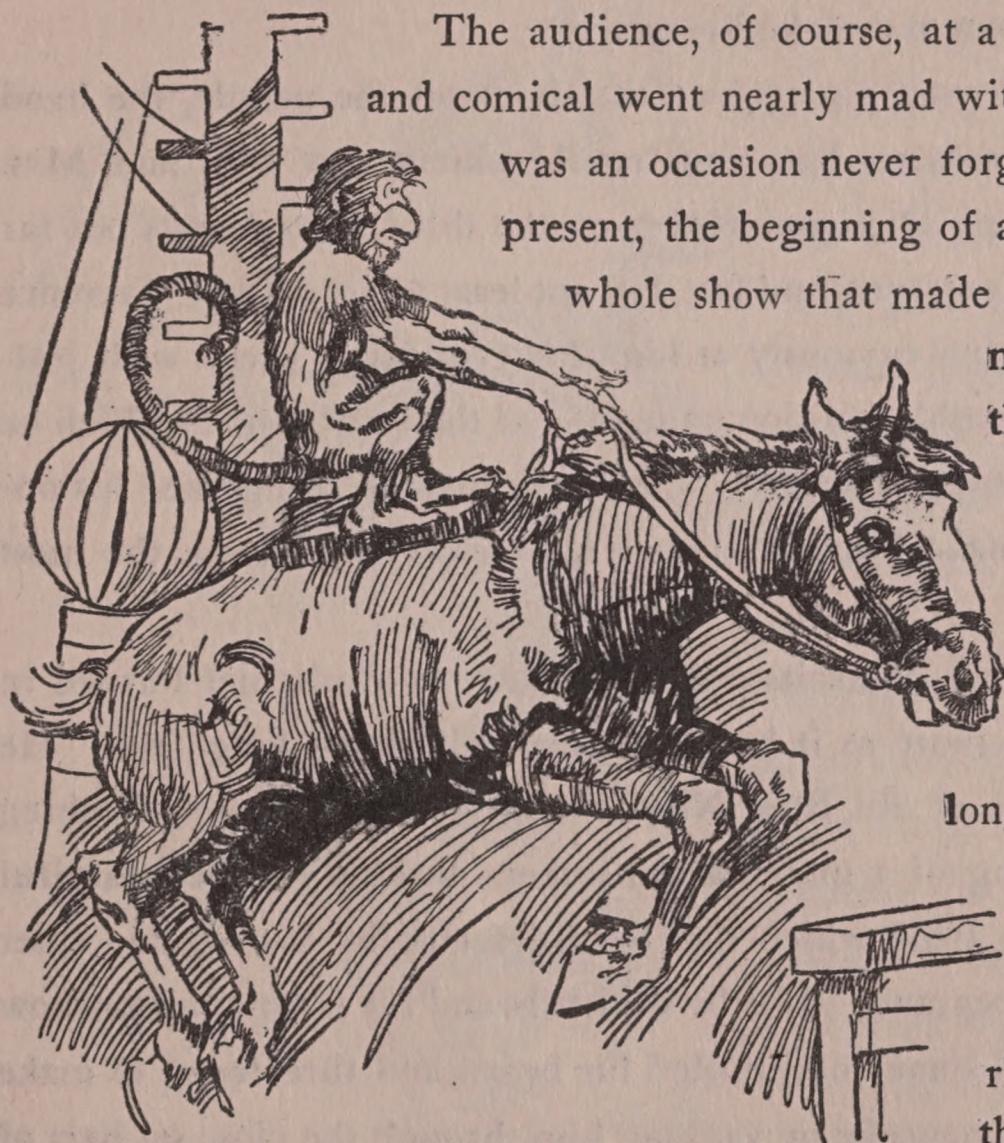
They were apparently frightened out of their wits and every one of them took to his heels, leaving the ring in the possession of the strangest group that, up to that time, had ever been seen at any circus, though it became a common sight afterward for the fashion of a new departure in circus performing was now being thus strangely set.

Without pausing, the monkeys took up the work of entertaining the people. It was found afterward, on inquiry, that they had learned their parts by being able to watch the acting day after day from their cage.

Some of them mounted the trapeze and gave an exhibition of daring climbing, swinging, jumping, tight rope walking such as had never before been seen. Others leaped upon the horses which were

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

in the ring on their arrival, and dashed around helter skelter, jumping through rings, leaping from one horse to another while going at breakneck speed.



audiences might be accommodated.

The audience, of course, at a sight so novel and comical went nearly mad with delight. It was an occasion never forgotten by those present, the beginning of a boom for the whole show that made its owners rich men, for from that day the crowds which came were bigger than ever before. It was not long before it was necessary to introduce three big rings in order that the vast

Billy Whiskers certainly had no idea what the result would be

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

when he, as he afterward expressed it, let loose that box of monkeys. Even when they forced him to go into the ring, calling him their leader, his only thought was to find some way to shake the whole caboodle of them and make his escape.

But he no sooner perceived the shouts of the people, the hand clapping, the waving hats and handkerchiefs, saw Mr. and Mrs. Treat with Tom, Dick and Harry on the third row of seats not far from the main entrance, and last, but not least to his delight, Terrence Bull Pup peering enviously at him, his eyes fairly green with jealousy, from a humble position under one of the front seats to which he had evidently sneaked entirely unnoticed, than he recognized his opportunity to make himself famous and resolved to make the most of it.

The old love of excitement, adventure and mischief burned in his heart once more as it had not done for a long, long time. He forgot his rage at old Blue Nose Mandrill who was now dashing around the ring in a most harum-scarum fashion on the beautiful white Arabian steed which had been deserted by his regular rider on the first appearance of Billy Whiskers and his troupe, forgot how cruelly the old sinner had pulled his beard and threatened to make him as flat as a pancake by yanking him through the close set bars of his cage. He thought only of the fact that by strange chance he was the acknowledged leader of these bold acrobats who were taking a great audience by storm.

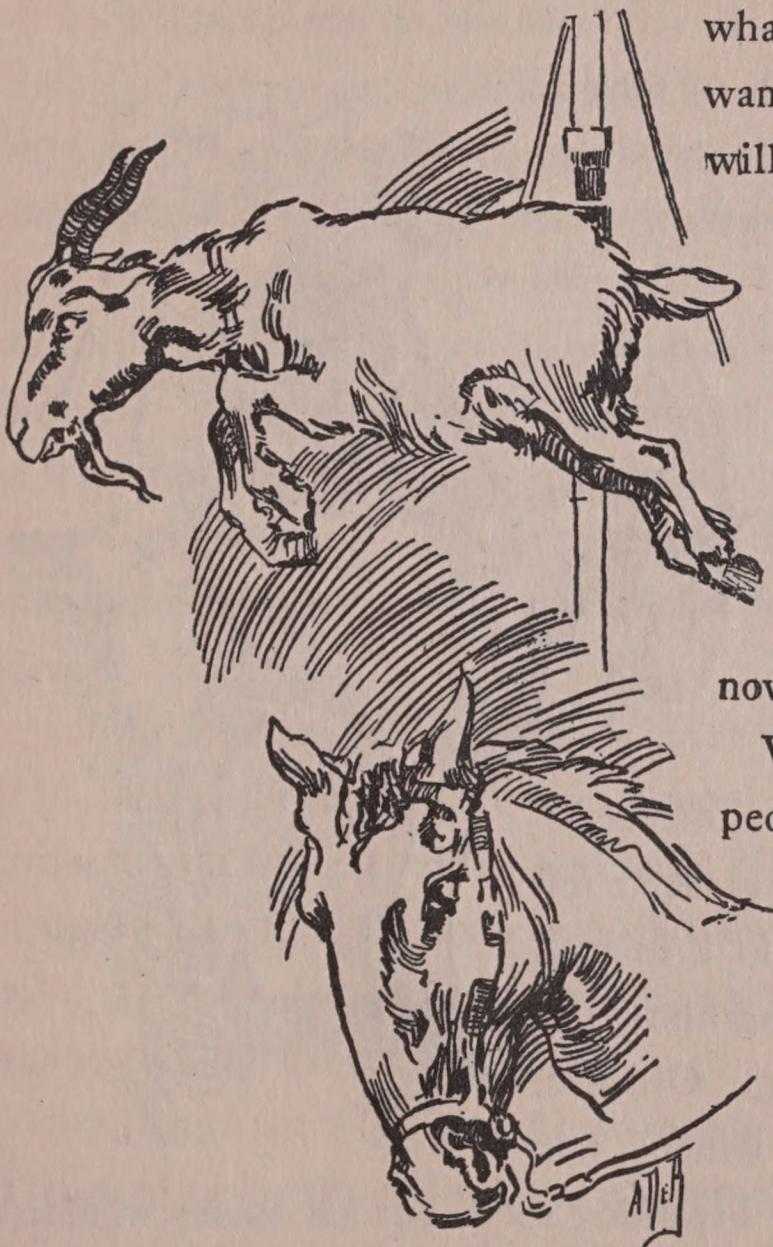
Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"Whatever may come of it," said Billy, talking to himself of course, "now is my chance and I'll improve it. These monkeys know

what they are doing and if they want me to be their leader, I will. It won't do to be too easy with them. They have undertaken to amuse this great audience which seems pleased with their efforts and it's my part to keep them at it and up to the mark. No shirking now."

Whereupon our Billy stepped proudly into the center of the ring. A little while before he had felt tired and was beginning to look bedraggled, especially after his trying experience with Colonel Mandrill,

but there were no signs of anything of the sort now. The Treat boys thought that they had never seen him look so handsome. Ter-

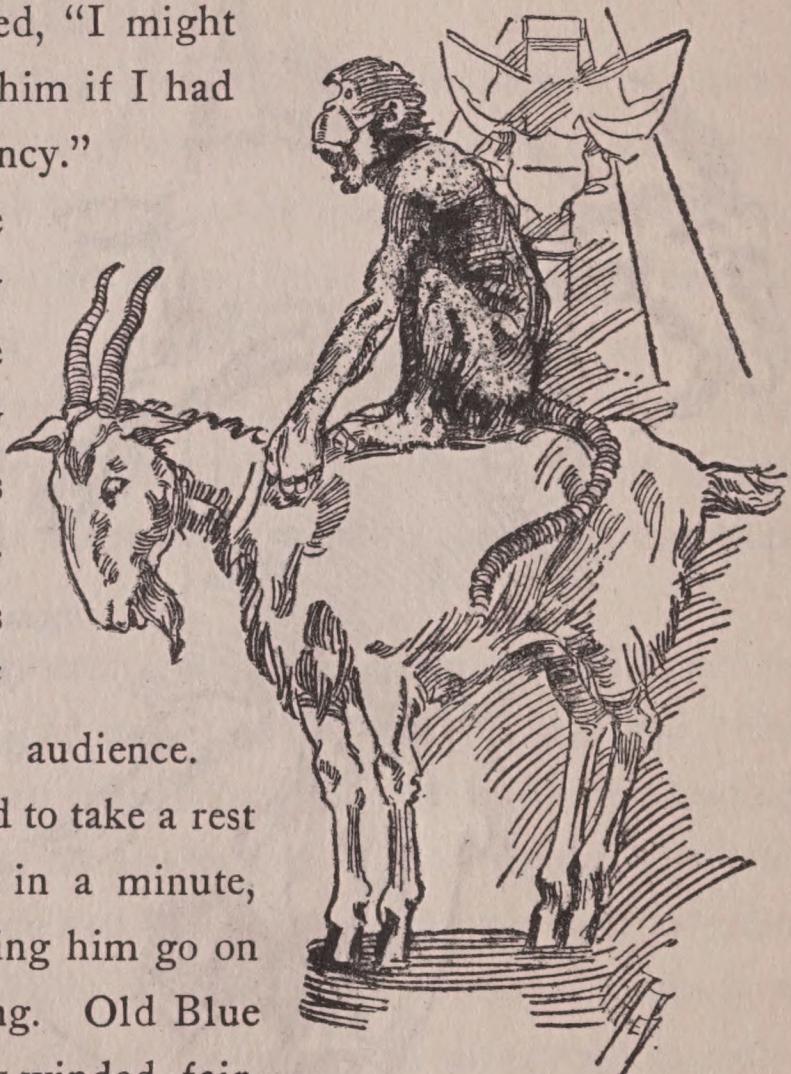


Billy Whiskers at the Circus

rence Bull Pup wished as he had never wished anything before in his life that he had not written that snubbing letter to so famous a personage.

"Just think," he growled, "I might be sharing his glory with him if I had had more sense and decency."

No clown ever took the fancy of a crowd as Billy Whiskers did now. He bowed and bowed in every direction in recognition, as it seemed, of the great applause that greeted his own efforts and those of his troupe to please the audience. If any of the monkeys tried to take a rest Billy was down on him in a minute, sending him aloft or making him go on with his hair-raising riding. Old Blue Nose, who was completely winded, fairly begged and plead for a breathing spell, but his leader wouldn't hear to it but made him mount his white Arabian and go on with his trick work.



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

For fully ten minutes, while the others were performing, Billy did not give any exhibition of his own high jumping.

"I'll save that to the last," he thought. His whole time and attention were occupied in keeping the others going and in acknowledging the plaudits of the audience. Finally he jumped over the back of one of the ponies, then over that of one of the smaller horses.

"I must try the big black stallion," said Billy. "If I succeed, we will clear out for we do not want to run this business into the ground. My, that will be the whale of a jump! I never saw such a big horse in my life. It won't do for me to fall down now. These ungrateful monkeys would depose me, the Treat family would feel disgraced, and that snooping Terrence Bull Pup would be tickled to death. Here goes!"

Just as he said that, the great black stallion came galloping by.

"He will never make it," shouted the excited and breathless crowd, for it was plain to be seen what Billy was planning to do.

He jumped high and true, but the spectators were right for he did not succeed in going over but lighted fair and square right on the big black's back instead.

Nobody but Billy ever knew that he had failed of his purpose. It looked as though it had been his intention right along to be borne out of the ring in this proud fashion. Even his band of monkeys thought so.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

The big horse dashed once around the ring with triumphant Billy on his back bowing his acknowledgements on all sides, and then down the alley where the performers made their regular exit.

The monkeys, seeing their leader departing, without waiting to be called, followed in quick pursuit.

What happened then will have to be reserved for our next chapter.



CHAPTER IX

BILLY WHISKERS JOINS THE CIRCUS

CHEN the show manager saw all the performers and even the clown come running out of the ring right in the midst of their fourth act, he was naturally very greatly surprised and excited.

He thought that they had all gone crazy and flew around like a hen with her head off trying to make them return and go on with their work.

At last one of them, more composed than the others, made him understand that something very unusual had happened and that they did not dare go back into the ring.

"Look and see for yourself if you can't believe me," he finally said.

So the frantic manager pulled aside the tent flap just in time to be greeted by the shouts and cheers that the great audience gave to Billy Whiskers and the monkeys when they saw the astonishing feats they were performing, as though they were all trained to the business.

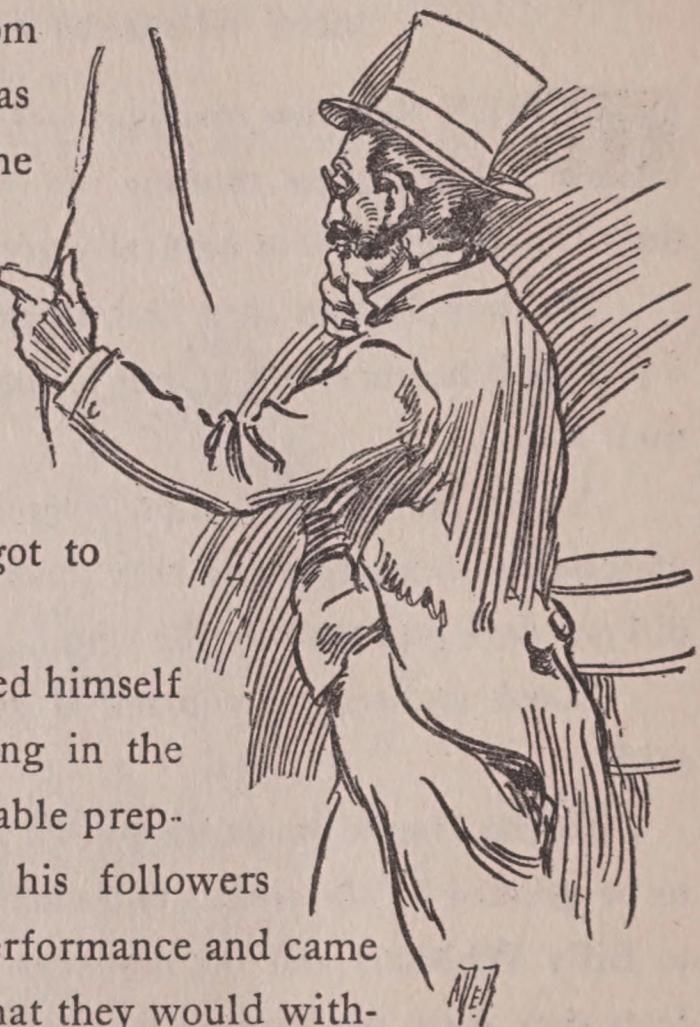
"That beats me hollow," fairly stuttered the flabbergasted manager. "I can't understand it at all, but I hope I know a good thing

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

when I see it, and I'm no judge if this doesn't prove the greatest feature and biggest drawing card the show ever had. The trouble will be to keep them at it right along. Those monkeys," you could see he didn't like the monkeys from the way he spoke, "are about as much to be depended upon as the east wind. That big goat seems to make them toe the mark. I wonder where he came from and who owns him? There is one thing certain, this show from now on has just got to have him at any price."

The manager, having satisfied himself with the way things were going in the ring, hustled back to make suitable preparations to receive Billy and his followers when they had finished their performance and came out, for he had no doubt but that they would withdraw in the same manner as regular actors; and in this, as we already know, he was quite right.

The keepers and handy men were summoned from all sides to be ready to assist if any attempt at escape should be made. The best



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

meal obtainable was hastily collected and temptingly spread out, and everything possible done to provide for the comfort of the new performers and to show how greatly pleased the manager was at their most successful efforts to entertain his audience. He very shrewdly thought that by this means he could induce them to repeat their act the next day and for many succeeding days.

It is a question whether or not Billy Whiskers and the monkeys would have peaceably accepted these terms, but when they finally got outside the ring they were all so tired from their unusual exertions that they had no spunk left to go on of themselves, much less to resist the inviting conditions which they found waiting for them.

As the goat and monkeys had put in their unexpected appearance at the beginning of the last act of the afternoon's performance, when they withdrew from the ring, the audience, after a great deal of cheering and repeated bursts of hand-clapping, began to slowly disperse.

The Treat family then held a council of war to decide how they could best lay hold of their property, Billy Whiskers, and get him safely back to Cloverleaf Farm. Though not one of them said so, there was fear in the heart of each that this would be no easy job.

While they felt sure of Billy's love for them, especially for little Dick, they had just seen him in a new and most unexpected role, and the older members of the family now more than suspected that there

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

were incidents in Billy's earlier history that they had not even guessed at. They now knew, in fact, that sometime, somewhere, he had been accustomed to a prominent and public position, that he must have seen a very great deal of the world for otherwise he could not possibly have fallen so naturally and gracefully into the trying position of clown and trick performer when so many thousands of eyes were looking right at him.

More than that, there was the unspoken fear that the Circus people might be unwilling to give up a goat who had proven himself such a wonder and had been the means of making the audience the most enthusiastic which had ever been in the great tent. They might hide him and claim that he had disappeared as mysteriously as he had come, or they might say that he was not Mr. Treat's property and refuse to give him up, or they might try to buy him.

Finally the monkeys had to be considered. It was evident they regarded Billy Whiskers, whether he liked it or not, as their leader, and there was no telling what sort of trouble they might make if an attempt was made to take him away from them.

It was finally decided that the best thing to do, and in fact the only course open, was for the family to stick together and go in pursuit of Billy by way of the exit through which he had disappeared on the back of the great black horse.

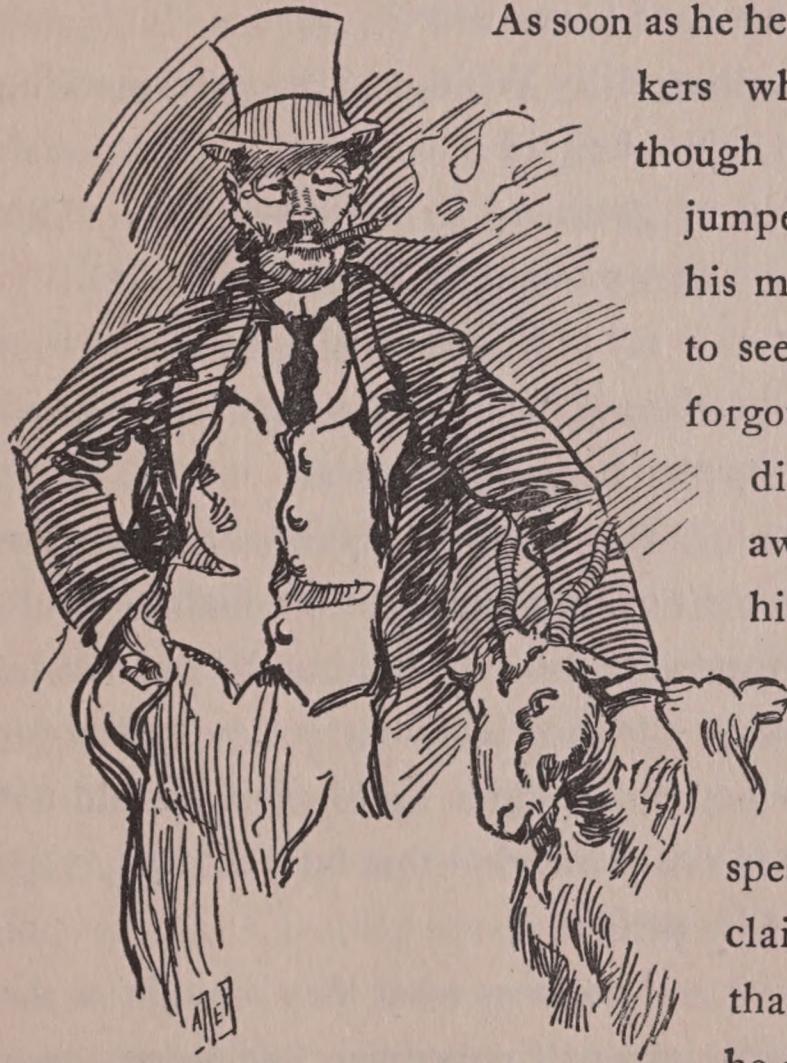
Very soon therefore, the jubilant manager of the show was con-

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

fronted by Mr. and Mrs. Treat with Tom, Dick and Harry at their heels.

"We've come to claim our property," began Mr. Treat.

"Yes, Billy Whiskers, he's my goat," piped little Dick.



As soon as he heard that voice, Billy Whiskers who was resting near by, though he had not been seen, jumped up and rushed to greet his master. He was so pleased to see the family that he quite forgot that he was probably in disgrace for having run away and gave every sign of his great regard for them.

From Billy's actions it was so plain to be seen that Mr. Treat was speaking the truth when he claimed him for his property that the Circus man, whatever he might have planned to do before, did not have the face to question his word. At the same time he had no intention of surrendering Billy. As the boys were just as

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

strongly of the opinion that they would not give up their favorite playmate, it looked for a time as though there would be a deadlock.

But the manager was very cute and he knew by long experience how to manage people both big and little. Had he not spent long years in learning how to amuse and please them?

He did not begin by calling Billy Whiskers a good-for-nothing old goat not worth his salt. No, he said that he was a fine animal, the most splendid specimen of goathood he had ever seen. This greatly pleased his owners for they thought the same way about Billy. Then Mr. Circusman went on to say how fond he already was of him and how kind he would be to him if he was his property. And so by easy stages he led up to the plan he had to propose.

He said that he had no idea that they would think of selling the goat and that he had no thought of trying to buy him, that he would almost as soon think of trying to buy little Dick himself, but that he hoped that they would consider allowing Billy to travel with him for the rest of the season. If they would agree to this Billy would not only be given the best care in every way, but that he would pay very handsomely for the use of him besides.

Mr. Treat asked his wife and the boys what they thought of the plan. While Mrs. Treat, who, you will remember, had always been a little suspicious of Billy, seemed quite willing to consider it and wanted to know what Mr. Circusman meant by "paying handsomely" for Billy, the boys took an altogether different view of the case.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Both Tom and Harry said that they did not want to part with Billy at any price even if it was not for keeps, while Dick set up a perfect ki-yi at the very thought.

"If I can once get the boys on my side it will be all right," thought the manager. He turned to one of his men standing near and told him to go quick and bring the chestnut pony hitched to his wagonette, but he didn't say what he wanted of this gay little turn-out. The man shortly returned and with him was the chestnut pony.

"Say, Dick, I'll give you this pony, harness, wagon and all if you will let me take Billy Whiskers."

Dick, however much he loved Billy, could not resist an offer like this. He had seen this very pony, harnessed as he now stood before him, in the parade earlier in the day, and he had thought at the time if he only owned a rig like that he would be the happiest boy in the world, but it never entered his head that by any possibility he might have this wish come true.

When the manager saw by Dick's smiling face that he was all right with him, he turned to Tom and Harry and asked them what they wanted for their share of Billy Whiskers for the rest of the season.

Tom replied promptly that he wanted a gun and Harry said that he did too.

This rather startled Mr. Circusman for it did not seem to him

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

that the boys were big enough to handle a gun safely and he expected that he was going to have trouble in fixing it up with them. He talked the matter over with Mr. Treat and soon found that he did not object to the guns.

It appeared that both boys were very fond of hunting already and had more than once been caught out with their father's old muzzle-loading rifle, which was known to be dangerous. Being told not to do this and even punishments failed to put a stop to the practice. For this reason, doubtless, Mr. Treat welcomed this chance of getting guns of safest make and best fitted for the hunting small boys found in the woods near Cloverleaf Farm.

The manager of the Circus, therefore, gave Mr. Treat the money with which to buy two good guns, one for Tom and one for Harry, with a handsome sum beside which he said Mr. and Mrs. Treat were to use in getting themselves a remembrance of this day at the Circus.

After these arrangements had been made the saddest part of the whole business took place, namely, bidding Billy Whiskers good-bye. Of course, Mr. and Mrs. Treat did this without much fuss. Tom and Harry were so excited about the guns which were to be bought before they started for home and were so anxious to get to the gun store that they came near overlooking the fact but for Billy there would have been no guns to buy. But when they remembered this they were really grateful and expressed their regret at parting from

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

their old playfellow so feelingly that before they knew it all three of them were in tears.

By far the most touching good-bye was that of little Dick. He and Billy had been the greatest friends from the first. The big goat had drawn the red wagon with Dick aboard ever since the little chap was big enough to sit up. Never once had he run away with him or spilled him out. More than that, Billy Whiskers and Bob had saved Dick from drowning, as you remember, when he tumbled off the bank into the swimming hole down by the wood lot. So when Dick came to say farewell to Billy it seemed as though he could not let him go, and the manager was really afraid that Dick would back out of his bargain or, what was worse, that Billy Whiskers would refuse to stay behind his little master. But finally Mrs. Treat took matters in hand and soon effected a parting.

Tom, Dick and Harry climbed into the wagonette behind the beautiful chestnut pony, now Dick's property, and drove away to the gun store where Mr. Treat promised to meet them and buy the new guns.

Billy Whiskers' friends at Cloverleaf Farm were astonished that evening when the boys drove into the yard in their gay rig drawn by the beautiful pony. They looked in vain for Billy Whiskers.

"I'm going to see what this means at once," said Abbie, the black cat, who, in spite of the fact that she had swelled her tail, hunched up

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

her back and scolded when Billy had asked her about the Circus, was at heart very fond of him. She now displayed such gentle manners, purred so softly and asked questions in such a winning way that she soon had the whole story from the pony and lost no time in telling it.

The friends of Billy Whiskers held a meeting that same evening in which each one told of his very high esteem of him. Afterward resolutions of respect were unanimously passed by a standing vote.

They all acted as though they never expected to see Billy again. If this was their idea, they were never more mistaken in their lives.



HE RODE ON THE BACK OF JUMBO, THE GREAT ELEPHANT.

CHAPTER X

THE KIDNAPPERS FOILED

AFTER his friends from Cloverleaf Farm left him, Billy Whiskers lay down to rest and think matters over. The monkeys, who had been keeping a sharp eye on him all the time, formed in a ring around him. They had no idea of letting the friend who had opened the door of their cage, and whom they had chosen their leader on the spot get away from them now.

When it looked as though the Treat family might take him back to Cloverleaf Farm, they had quickly decided among themselves that if he went they would go too. This, of course, would have led to no end of trouble and confusion. Just imagine what would have happened if Billy had returned with such a drab following as that.

At first Billy Whiskers thought that he never could go to sleep with the monkeys all about him. He was not used to them yet and still thought that they were the ugliest looking creatures in the world. He didn't want to hurt their feelings by asking them to go away and give him a little peace. It would never do to offend them now, he thought, so he just shut his eyes, and as he had a great deal to think over, soon forgot all about them.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"Well, this certainly has been a great day, so far," said Billy to himself. It seemed a very long time since he had stolen away from home in the early morning, and he ran over quickly in his mind the events that finally culminated in his unexpectedly finding himself at the head of a troupe of amazing acrobatic performers, taking a leading part in the performance of one of the greatest shows on earth.

"And where am I now?" went on Billy, still talking to himself. "I hardly know yet. The manager evidently thinks because he gave Dick that pony and treated the rest of the family so handsomely that I am his property for the rest of the summer. May be I am and may be I am not. It all depends how I am served and whether or no I like the business on better acquaintance with it. I'll try it for awhile at any rate. It looks to me now as though I might have a lot of fun out of it. I have been living pretty quietly at Cloverleaf for a long time, and I suspect that I am getting rusty and beginning to look more or less like a farmer. I'm too young for that yet awhile.

"This position will give me a chance to see no end of new places. I can get well acquainted with all the animals, and perhaps I can do something to make their lives pleasanter—I will if I can, but I must be careful never to go as close to any of their cages as I did to the monkeys' this afternoon. What if it had been the lion's cage instead, there would be no Billy Whiskers here now."

The very thought of it made him tremble all over.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

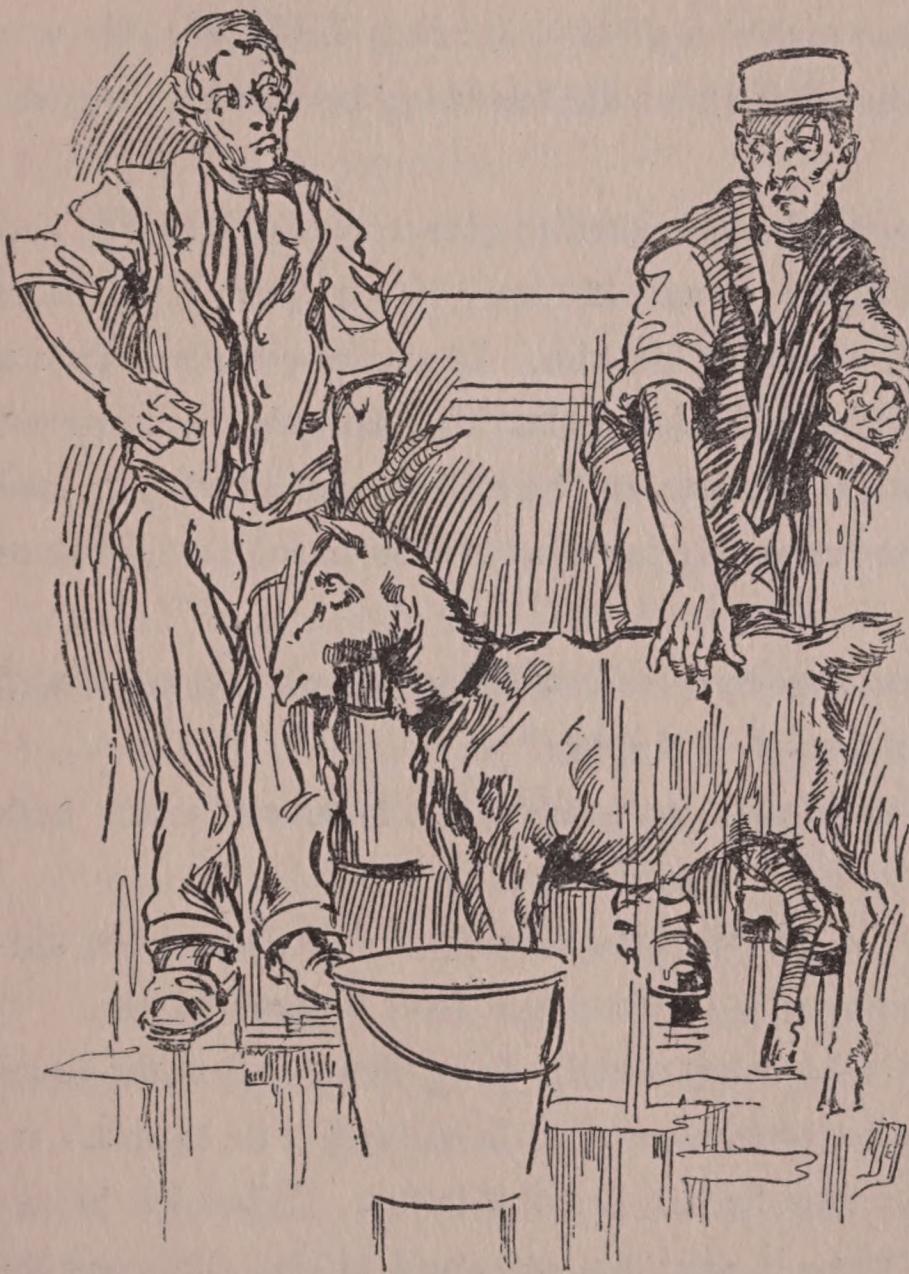
"And then there is the big elephant. I wonder what he thinks of me now. I hope he saw me in the ring and knows that I really

do amount to something. If not, he must suppose I am a dunce for having thought his trunk a hitching strap," and Billy giggled to himself again at the very remembrance of that mistake.

With pleasant thoughts and plans like these Billy Whiskers finally fell asleep.

It did not seem to him that he had much more than

closed his eyes when he was aroused by one of the keepers who said to



Billy Whiskers at the Circus

his helper that it was time to prepare the big goat for the evening performance, that the manager had said that he was to be given a bath.

At first Billy was far from pleased at being disturbed. He was still sleepy, and he felt that about the last thing he wanted then was a bath.

Just at that moment he happened to glance at his right side and saw how gray with dust he was. He knew too by past experiences how much good a bath would do him. It was worth more than a night's rest, he had often said. More than that, Billy was very proud of his appearance, as we all know, and he now felt not a little ashamed that he had been seen in the ring in the afternoon in such an unkempt condition.

"If they call me handsome with all this dirt on me, what will they think when I am spick and span?"

So Billy decided to make no trouble, but to submit to the bath without a rumpus.

It was lucky he did for otherwise he would have been kidnapped and there is no telling what might have become of him.

This is the way that it happened. Billy thought that the voice of the man who awakened him sounded familiar but he couldn't remember at the time where he had heard it before. When his helper called him Mike he knew in a minute when and where. This was the very same man who had been looking for him when he was hiding

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

in the big pine box after creating such a disturbance by jumping off Jumbo's back onto the freaks' platform.

Not thinking that Billy Whiskers knew enough to understand what they were saying, they talked freely and made their plans while his bath was in progress.

"You were right, Mike, in thinking this big goat a very valuable piece of property," said Jim, for that was the helper's name. "I only wish we had found him."

"Yes, if we had, and could have hidden him away for a day or two, we could have sold him to the manager for a big pile of money."

"Just think of the fun we would have had with three or four hundred dollars apiece! That pony with his gold-plated harness and the dandy wagon that the old man gave the little fellow must have cost all of that, to say nothing of the price of the two guns and the wad of money for the owner and his wife. It's a sorry day for us when we let this goat slip through our fingers. It almost seems as though he was our property now."

Mike thought hard for several minutes before answering. A wicked scheme was shaping itself in his mind.

"You are right, Jim, he is our property, and if you will help me, we'll have him yet. I've thought it all out. It is plain to be seen that the old man, as you call the manager, expects you and me to take care of his nibs here and that will give us just the chance we need.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

We won't lose any time about it either, for it will be easier to get away with him now than later.

"Tonight, when we come to load up, instead of putting Billy Whiskers in a car, we'll nail him up in a box and leave him on the station platform. You and I will stay behind with him. As soon as the train pulls out, we'll take him and start in the other direction. Later on we can decide what is best to do. Either we can start a show of our own with Billy Whiskers as the main attraction, or we can take him to Ringling Brothers and get our own price for him."

"All right," said Jim, "I'm with you. It looks good to me. We are both of us sick of this old show anyway. The Ringlings will hear about the goat and monkey act and have to put something on to match it. It's lucky for us that they are no further away than Dayton. My idea is that we had better sell the goat and skip to New York or Chicago as soon as we can. There is sure to be a row when he is missed. I don't believe these monkeys will act for cold beans when their leader is gone."

"You be around handy tonight to help me box his goatship. He'll probably make no trouble for it's all new to him, but whether he does or not, he's got to do as we want and it will be best for us to work together."

"Just look at him now! He is a beauty. I wouldn't believe that soap and water could make such a change in him."

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"Yes, and wait until I have combed out his hair and beard and polished his horns," said the now enthusiastic Jim. "Ringlings will give a thousand dollars for this goat, or I miss my guess."

As Mike and Jim now felt that every good point and new beauty they found in Billy Whiskers meant just so much more money in their pockets, you can well see why they took so much trouble to make him look his best.

In the meanwhile Billy Whiskers was considering the new danger that now confronted him. For several very good reasons he had no intentions of letting Mike and Jim get away with him.

To begin with, he didn't like either of them. More than that, the Circus manager had paid his friends of Cloverleaf Farm a handsome sum for allowing Billy to stay with him, and finally, he felt sure of rich food, kind treatment, constant excitement, growing fame and a return to his old home at the end of the season. To be sure, on the other hand, the association with the monkeys was not much to his liking, but as they felt very grateful to him and were evidently kindly disposed, Billy knew that he had the upper hands of them and he felt that as long as that situation lasted he could stand it.

"I'll do this," decided Billy. "When it comes time to go, I will make these monkeys insist that I ride with them in their cage. In the meantime I will tell them all about the danger that threatens me and fix it up with them that when Mike and Jim try to get me away

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

they are all to pitch on to that precious pair of thieves and give them a lesson that they will not soon forget."

Billy laughed softly to himself as he thought of the trouble he had cooked for his enemies.

There was an hour or more before it came time for Billy and his band to repeat the performance of the afternoon. He improved it by telling Colonel Blue Nose Mandrill and the rest of the scheme that had been hatched to kidnap him, and you can easily believe that he had no trouble in getting the monkeys to agree to his plan to thwart it. In fact, Billy had to specially caution them not to go too far. Colonel Mandrill said right away that he would fix at least one of them so that he would never try to steal one of his friends again, while the rest declared that they would see to it that the other did not escape. They all looked so fierce that Billy thought once more of old Mr. Coon's horror of monkeys, and remembered how he felt when old Blue Nose had him by the neck and beard and threatened to pull him into his cage even if he was smashed into a pulp in the process.

"Don't kill them," said Billy, in a hurry. "But you may scare them out of their wits. They deserve it."

"I'll see how I feel at the time," muttered Colonel Mandrill, and Billy couldn't get any more of a promise out of him than that. All the rest, however, promised not to go too far.

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By this time the moment had arrived for Billy and the monkeys to go into the ring.

People who had been present in the afternoon had spread the news of the astonishing last act. Many of them had returned to see it a second time, and there was a vast crowd all told, very many of whom were interested chiefly in it. Under such circumstances, it is needless to say that the appearance of the goat and his monkeys was greeted by deafening bursts of applause.

Billy, after his bath, both looked and felt fine. The monkeys, too, were rested and glad of an opportunity to repeat, with variations, the feats of the afternoon.

The manager, who had been feeling very nervous for fear that his new performers could not be depended upon, was vastly relieved at the way the act started off, and his smiling face soon told how pleased he was to find that his fears were groundless.

At the end of fifteen minutes, out came Billy on the back of the big black charger followed by his weary and panting but none the less happy band. The monkeys did not seem to object in the least to the fact that Billy worked them almost to death.

If the crowd of spectators had been enthusiastic in the afternoon, they were vociferous in their applause in the evening. Such cheering and hand-clapping had never been heard in the big tent before.

"It means," said the manager, talking the matter over with the

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

treasurer, "that this will be the biggest money-making season this show has ever known. Now is the time for us both to ask for a good big increase in our pay." No wonder he was pleased.

Soon all was noise, bustle and confusion. The time had come to pack up and get aboard the train preparatory to going to the next city.

The question where and with whom Billy Whiskers was to ride soon came up for settlement. As he had expected, Mike and Jim were told to take care of him and see to it that he had the best of everything.

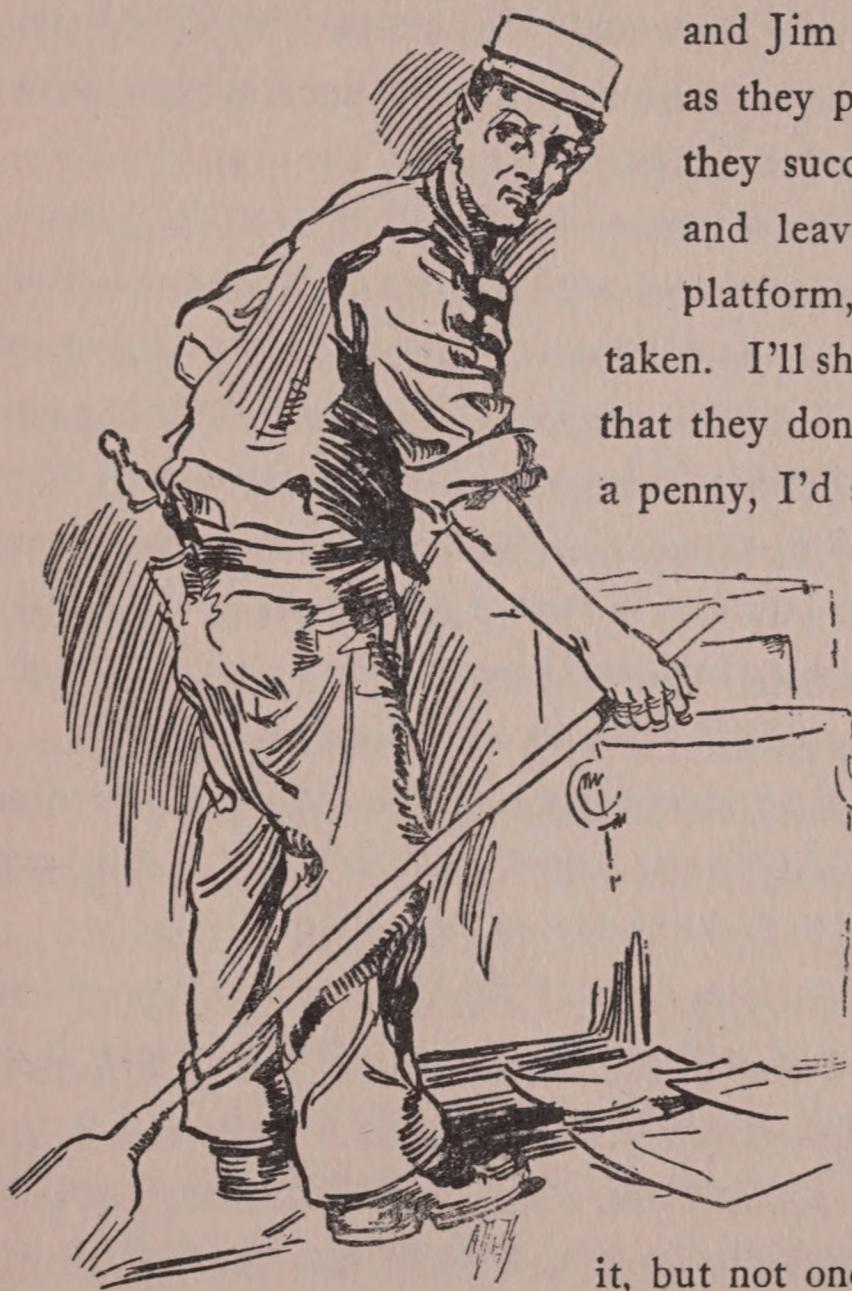
"We'll put him in a big box by himself for tonight," proposed Mike, "and after this a place can be fixed for him in the car with the Shetland ponies."

"All right," returned the manager, "but take care that he goes through in good shape. I wouldn't take ten thousand dollars for that goat right now. He'll be worth ten times that money to this show before the end of the season."

Billy, who was keenly watching, saw Mike wink at Jim when this was said. It made him anxious for he knew it would make them more determined to steal him than ever. During the excitement of the performance, he had forgotten all about their scheme, but now it came back to him in a hurry and he wondered if he had been wise in trusting his personal safety altogether to Colonel Mandrill and his family.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

"Well, it's too late now to make any new plans," thought Billy. "If the monkeys can't save me, I'm lost to this show. But if Mike



and Jim think that they can do as they please with me, even if they succeed in boxing me up and leaving me on the depot platform, they are mightily mistaken. I'll show them a thing or two that they don't seem to know. For a penny, I'd start in right now. It

seems just as though it would feel good and rest my head to butt into big Mike."

But he thought better of it and resolved to wait.

By this time the monkeys' big cage was standing ready for them to get into it, but not one of them showed any disposition to take the hint. Mike and Jim, who were given charge

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

of them also, coaxed and coaxed in vain. Finally one of them caught Tittlebat Titmouse—that was the big name of the smallest monkey—and put him inside though he resisted with all his tiny might. But he wouldn't stay put. Out he popped as soon as the hand that held him let him go.

Finally Billy Whiskers jumped in and all the rest followed.

This delay made the monkey cage the last of all to get started. There was need to hurry. So Mike and Jim decided that they would put off boxing Billy up until they reached the station. They felt sure that there would be a chance in the darkness and confusion that there always was when loading the cars. The box they planned to put him in was carried to the train on the top of the big cage. Jim drove to the darkest and most out-of-the-way place he could that they might the less likely be interrupted in carrying out their wicked scheme.

Pretty soon after the wagon came to a halt, Mike appeared at the door of the cage. At first he called Billy Whiskers softly, and seemed greatly pleased to find him laying right by the cage door.

“It makes it just as easy as can be,” Billy heard him say. “You open the door, Jim, and I will yank him out. Shut and lock it as quick as ever you can and then help me, for I may need it.”

“You may indeed,” thought Billy. He could just make out to see that his friends, the monkeys, were wide awake and ready to do the parts agreed upon.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

The bolt was softly withdrawn and the cage door swung noiselessly open. Mike's great arm followed by his head and shoulders were thrust inside the cage. Billy felt himself firmly grasped about the waist and in another second he would have been dragged out and on the ground, but just in the nick of season the long thin arm of Colonel Mandrill shot out once more, but this time it grasped not Billy Whiskers but the neck of Mike, the keeper. We already know from Billy Whiskers' former experience the terrible strength of old Blue Nose's right arm. Mike was learning it now. He let go Billy and pulled and tore at the thing that was tightening about his throat. He would have called to Jim but could make no sound. He tried to pull away but all in vain.

Jim, of course, very soon discovered that there was something wrong. He crowded in by the side of Mike to find out what it might be. Quicker than it takes to tell it, a dozen lean arms, big and little, had grabbed him wherever they could lay hold, and in two seconds he was as helpless as Mike.

Billy did not try to interfere for a minute or two. Then he took matters in hand. He commanded Colonel Blue Nose to let go, but he did not obey. He ordered the other monkeys to drop Jim, but they followed old Blue Nose's bad example.

Billy was now frightened for the lives of the two men. He

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

didn't want to be responsible for their deaths in such a dreadful way. He reminded the monkeys that they had chosen him their leader and once more ordered them to give over their prey. At this Colonel Mandrill reluctantly obeyed and Mike dropped limp and insensible at the side of the cage. The others followed the example of old Blue Nose and Jim fell by the side of his pal in no better condition.

Billy and the monkeys might now have made their escape. They even spoke of it, but all were of the opinion that they were being treated too well at the time and the prospects of fun were too good to think of taking such a step just then. They agreed among themselves that they might consider the subject later on if things did not go to suit them.

Presently Mike began to collect his scattered senses. They laughed in the cage when they heard him grunting and groaning.

Just then he evidently touched Jim who was also coming to, for they heard them whispering together. It would seem that they were both thanking their lucky stars that they had escaped with their lives.

"We'll have to give it up," Mike was heard to say. "Those monkeys are sure holy terrors and they will never surrender the great goat. I know there's big money in him, but he ain't for us, Jim," and Jim agreed.

Someone was calling to them to hurry up with the monkey cage and with more grunting and groaning they got to their feet and drove

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

up the inclined plane onto the car. Soon they were rumbling along to the next place where the great show was to exhibit.

Billy Whiskers, in the cage with the monkeys, fell asleep wondering what the coming days could have in store for him.



TOM AND HARRY INVITED THEM TO THE HOUSE.

CHAPTER XI

THE WRECK

BILLY WHISKERS was now fairly launched on his career in the big show that made him more famous than ever before. From the lordly way he ruled the monkeys he was soon everywhere known as "King Billy," though he never liked that proud title as well as plain Billy Whiskers.

It was not long before the billboards were covered with life-size pictures of himself and his troupe. When he gazed for the first time in his life, but a short time since, at those wonderful show pictures at The Corners, he little dreamed that he would ever have such an honor. The Circus manager was quick to see what a drawing card Billy was and of course made the very most of it by advertising him far and wide.

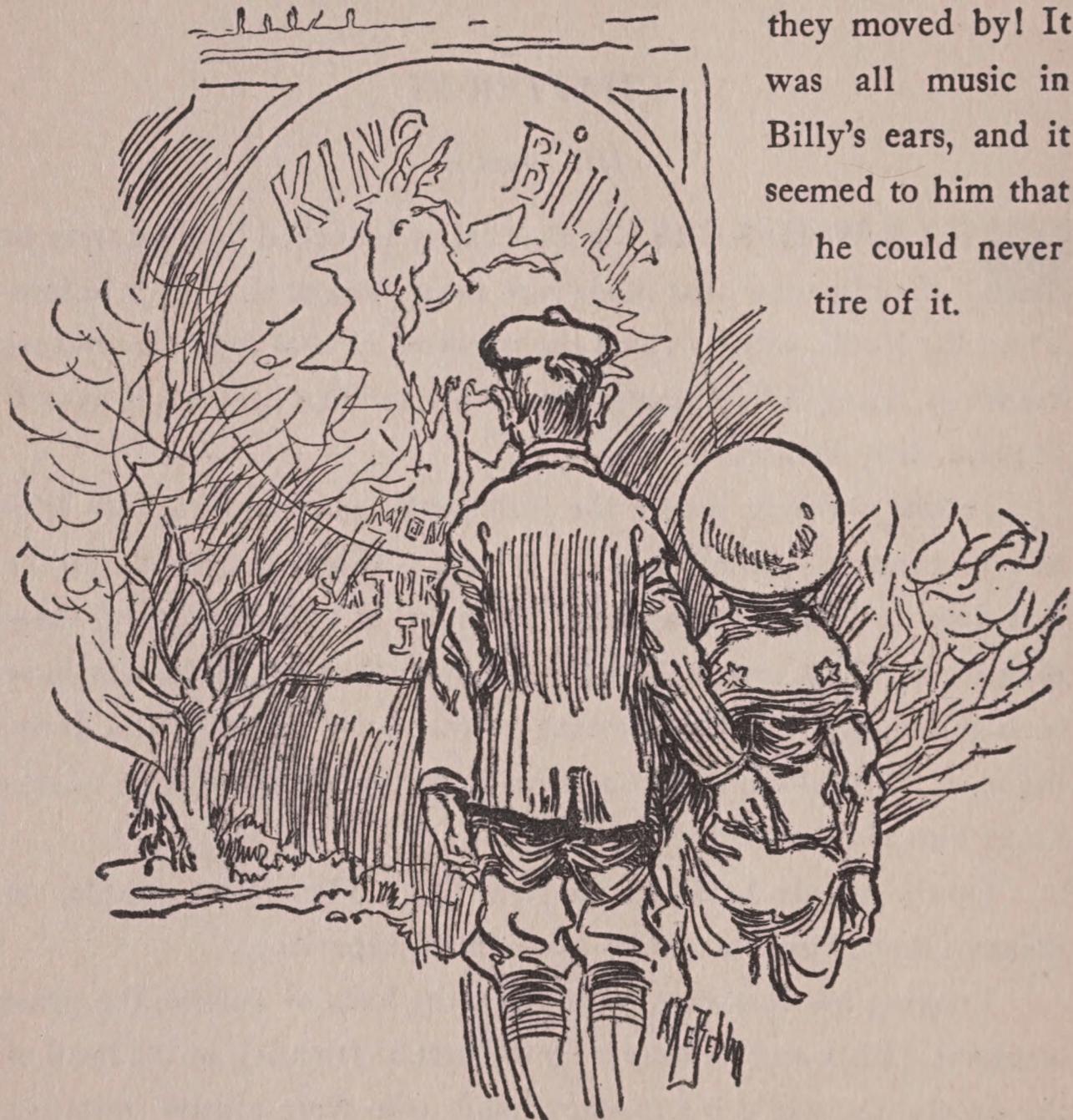
On the whole, he liked his new life. The grand parade, on pleasant mornings, was always a delightful experience.

Looking his very best, he rode on the back of Jumbo, the great elephant, (Billy and he were soon the best of friends), at the head of the procession, while his monkey band, who were always imitating his example when they possibly could, rode on the backs of the other

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

elephants. How the crowds shouted and cheered and laughed as

they moved by! It was all music in Billy's ears, and it seemed to him that he could never tire of it.



The afternoon and evening performances furnished two more op-

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

portunities each day for Billy and the monkeys to show themselves to vast and always admiring audiences.

The manager of the Circus was never better pleased than at his great luck at having secured such an attraction. It was proving, as he had foretold, the best-paying season in all the long and successful history of the great Show. For this reason, as one can easily see, he made things as pleasant as he possibly could for Billy. Both he and the monkeys were furnished all the time with the things that they liked best to eat, and nothing was left undone that could add to their comfort and enjoyment.

The Circusman felt in his bones that King Billy was a very independent person who might at any time, if things did not go to suit him, kick out of the traces and there was no telling what might happen then. The monkeys, without him to lead them, would not be worth their salt as actors. There had been convincing proof of this one day when Billy was so sick that he could not lead them into the ring on account of having eaten too much ice cream with chocolate dressing the night before.

The audience was so disappointed that there came near being a riot and a great many demanded their money back.

After that great pains were taken with Billy's diet, and his health was most carefully guarded.

Mike and Jim continued to have the care of Billy. After their

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

first experience in trying to kidnap him, described in the last chapter, they never attempted anything of the sort again. As a matter of fact they soon became very much attached to their charges and took a great deal of pride in seeing that they always looked their best, both when they were on parade and when they entered the ring.

A rival circus sent two desperate characters to try and poison Billy because he was drawing all the money and their business was very bad in consequence. Mike caught these two fellows putting paris green in Billy's salad one night. With the help of Jim he held them both until assistance came and the would-be murderers were turned over to the police.

When the manager heard of this he complimented the keepers on their watchfulness and doubled their pay. Billy was grateful to them too. He forgave the attempt they had made to steal him, and after that they were always good friends.

During the summer the big Circus visited the large cities and towns of most of the western states, going as far west as Denver, Colorado. It then turned eastward once more, and Billy began to feel that he was homeward bound. This made him very happy, for he had not forgotten or ceased to love his old friends at Cloverleaf Farm. While he liked the excitement, high living and luxury of his present life and had become very good friends both with his keepers and with many of the wild animals in the cages whose hard lot he

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

was always trying to make pleasanter, still they were never to him quite like home folks.

There was nobody who took the place of little Dick. He knew by this time that he could never again make so dear a friend. Then there were old Bob, Abbie (the black cat), the bay colt and other horses, Big Red, the fierce bull, and his wives, and—for spice and variety—the thievish old Coon down in the big chestnut, not forgetting Polly Parrot, sharp and snappish though she certainly was. Billy was beginning to think of them all more and more often, and the wish to see them and be with them again was growing greater day by day.

While spending a Sunday in St. Louis late in September, he addressed a letter to his friend Bob at Cloverleaf Farm.

As it presents very clearly his frame of mind at this time, and throws many sidelights on his circus life, it is here given in full.

St. Louis, Mo., Sept. 27, 1908.

Dear Bob and Other Home Friends:—

I hope that you have not been thinking that because I ran away to see the Circus at Springfield without saying good-bye to every one of you I do not care for you. If so, you were never more mistaken in your lives. It cost me a great deal of pain to do as I did. You little know how much real grief I felt the evening before I started when I went around and called on you all. I did not forget

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

how you had taken me in and befriended me when I was poor and hungry and sick and lame and alone, nor was I then nor shall I ever be unmindful of or ungrateful for your great kindness at that time. No, dear Bob and all the rest of you, you made a friend of Billy Whiskers then who will be true to you as long as he lives.

Nor must you think that because I have not written to you before this summer that my new business and friends have driven you out of my mind for even a little while. How often I think of you all, and every day I wish more and more that I was with you once again.

As you have no doubt heard, it has been a great time for me. I wish you could see what I have to do every day. You would be proud then that Billy Whiskers is one of your acquaintances. They tell me that I am famous and I judge that such is the case from the way the crowds cheer every time they see me.

Don't think that I have become vain and conceited when I tell you that I was never looking so handsome and distinguished as now. Owing doubtless to the great quantity of rich food that I eat daily I have put on more flesh, which improves my figure. Both my hair and beard are longer, whiter and silkier than ever before, while my horns and hoofs are manicured daily.

I try not to be proud and stuck up and never lose a chance of doing a kindness for the wretched wild animals that are shut up in their cages month after month. Just think how dreadful their lives

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must be. I wish I could tell you all about them but I haven't time now. Wait till I am home again, then I shall have many strange tales to tell about the lions, and tigers, and wolves, and bears, and all the rest. Some of them are so ferocious that even now the sound of their deep voices makes me tremble.

Speaking of home reminds me that the time is not now far distant when I shall be with you once more. Only the thought of it makes me very happy.

There is just one thing that keeps bothering me. I do not know how I am ever to get away from the monkeys who have chosen me their leader and declare that they will never leave me and that I shall never leave them. While my success in the show business is very largely due to them and I can have no doubt of their fondness for me, I may say to you—but you must never tell it—that I have never been able to like them very much. I do not forget the dreadful fright they gave me at first (it's a long story and I can't stop to tell it now) and I just expect they would treat me in the same way again if they suspected that I thought of leaving them. They are certainly the worst looking creatures I ever saw, and some of their manners are little short of disgusting. I shall have to be very sly when the time comes.

This letter is already too long though I haven't told you half of what I want to.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

I hope that little Dick and the boys are well and that the chestnut pony has not entirely taken my place in their hearts.

With best love to all,

Sincerely yours,

Billy Whiskers.

P. S.—Keep your eyes peeled and you will see me some bright morning before long.

From St. Louis, where Billy Whiskers wrote to his home friends, the big show moved steadily eastward; by the latter part of October it was once more in Ohio and not so very far from Farmersville, near which, you will remember, Cloverleaf Farm is located.

On the night of the thirtieth, when the show train was running between Hamilton and Zanesville, a head-end collision took place which threw most of the cars containing the animals off the track and down an embankment, piling them up one on the other in the utmost confusion. The frightened and tortured beasts, as well as their keepers, made the most fearful outcry that was ever heard.

For a long time the people who came to the rescue were afraid to approach the wreck lest a lion or a tiger or some other man-eating animal might find his cage burst open and make his escape, killing and devouring everybody that came in his way.

Fortunately Billy Whiskers and the monkeys were not killed or badly injured, though terribly shaken up and frightened almost to death.

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

As soon as Billy collected his wits and began to look about, he discovered that not only was the car in which he was riding smashed open, but that the jar and up-set had shaken the pin fastening the door of the big monkey cage out of place so that it was easy for him to get out.

"Now is my time," he quickly decided. "I can't do any good here, and while this racket keeps up I can get away. The monkeys are too scared and dazed to see what I am up to, and they will not think of following me now anyway. As good luck will have it, I am not very far from Cloverleaf Farm, and I know I can find my way there."

So he stole out of the overturned cage and car, picked his way as noiselessly and quickly as he could through the ruins, and started on a dead run for the protecting cover of a wood lot which he discovered not far off. It was not so dark but that he could make out its faint outline.

All unknown to Billy, there followed behind him a silent procession of dim and quiet figures, twelve in number. They were the monkeys pursuing their leader.

When he reached the wood, Billy stopped to rest and to take stock of his plight, whereabouts and plans.

Like shadows, the monkeys quickly gathered in a circle around him.

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"Now, Billy Whiskers," began old Blue Nose in his most dreaded tone, "will you please explain to me and my family what you mean by skipping out with no word to any of your band? While we may never have told you in so many words, you know very well what sort of punishment we reserve for a deserter. Speak!"

Although Billy was startled and had great difficulty in finding his voice, he was sharp enough to know that his fate now depended on lulling the suspicions of the monkeys. So he said:

"Colonel Mandrill, Tittlebat Titmouse and all the rest of you, I was never so glad in my life to see anyone as I am you now. I observe that you have all escaped that frightful wreck unhurt. After the collision, I was so shaken to pieces and frightened, while the din was so ear-splitting, without thinking a thing what I was doing, I started and ran. As you have seen, I stopped just as soon as I came to a safe place. Before now, if you hadn't have come, I should be on my way back to hunt for you."

"I hope I may be forgiven for that tale," added Billy under his breath.

The older monkeys whispered together for a short time, evidently trying to decide whether or not this plausible story was to be believed. Although it was manifest that there was a difference of opinion, the majority were in favor of accepting the explanation

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as true and this decision was quickly made known, to Billy's great relief.

"I've just been thinking," then said Billy, "that we will never have a better chance to escape than now. We are not a great many miles from my dear old home at Cloverleaf Farm which I have told you about so often. I think I can find the way. If we are agreed to the plan, I will try and lead you there."

This proposal led to another consultation, and while not very enthusiastic about it, the monkeys shortly said that they would go.

As no time was to be lost, they started north at once, keeping in the shadow of the woods.

"A nice time I'll have introducing this crumby looking crowd to my friends at Cloverleaf," mused Billy. "I wonder what the Coon will say," and the very thought made him laugh.

CHAPTER XII

HOME AGAIN

BY this time it was about three o'clock in the morning. There were two good hours before daylight, and the time was improved by travelling as fast as possible. Billy and his party kept within the woods wherever possible, the monkeys, for the most part, staying in the trees, leaping from one to another, which is the way they get about in their native forests. They can travel much faster that way than on the ground. They all enjoyed the freedom they were experiencing for the first time in years very greatly, and were in the best of spirits.

The racket their chattering made was so loud that Billy had to caution them about it for fear they might attract attention, and this they did not want to do.

It was easy to imagine what was sure to happen if anyone discovered that there was a drove of monkeys loose in the woods. The whole community would be quickly aroused and a big hunt started. By all means discovery of this sort must be avoided.

As soon as signs of daylight began to appear in the east, Billy looked about for a good place to hide during the day where they

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

would all be safe and could rest in peace and quiet until night came again when the journey could be resumed.

It so happened that they were at this time following the course of a little river which ran between steep banks of great rocks. Billy's sharp eyes soon detected an opening between two of these large enough for him to go in, so in he went. To his surprise, this opening grew in size as he advanced until shortly he found himself in a dark cave as big as a large room. There couldn't have been a better place for them to spend the day. A little brook ran through the cave so that the supply of good water was abundant.

It was plain to be seen from the bones scattered about that sometime this cave had been the home of wild animals, probably wolves or bears, but there were no signs of recent occupation, so Billy was not disturbed by any fears.

Going out, he hastily summoned the monkeys and told them of his fortunate discovery of a good hiding-place and bade them to lose no time in getting out of sight as it would soon be broad daylight. This they did in a hurry, Colonel Mandrill leading the way.

You might suppose that by this time they must have all been very hungry and so they would but that on their way during the night, they had passed through many fields where there was plenty of corn and pumpkins, through orchards where the boughs of the trees were bending beneath their weight of beautiful, ripe apples, through cab-

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

bage patches and fields of turnips. All the time they had helped themselves to everything they wanted.

If they were not hungry, they were certainly tired. The excitement of the railroad wreck and the unusual exertions of a two hours' tramp were enough to bring weariness to even the youngest and friskiest of the monkeys. Soon it was quiet in the cave except for the snoring of Colonel Mandrill who never could sleep quietly.

Evening had come before even Billy Whiskers, who had the responsibility of the expedition on his hands, roused from his deep, refreshing slumbers. He supposed from the silence all about him that all the others were still sleeping. As it was dark in the cave he could not tell whether it was day or night, so he thought he would slip out and take a look around when he could decide whether or not it was safe to start out. With this wise plan in mind, he made his noiseless way very nearly to the entrance of the cave, when—for the last time in this story—the long arm of Colonel Mandrill darted forth and nabbed him hard and fast.

“No you don’t, Billy Whiskers, for I have caught you again! It’s my belief that you have planned to sneak off and leave us here by ourselves. If I really thought so, I’d fix you here and now so you could never play us such a trick again. What have you got to say for yourself?”

“It’s no such thing,” answered Billy, mad through and through

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at this unjust suspicion, but scared at the same time. "I was just going out for a minute to see what time it is. This cave is so dark that I can't tell anything about it. If you don't believe me, you can come too."

"I will," grimly answered old Blue Nose.

Outside they found that the sun was already down and that it was fast growing dark.

Billy Whiskers and Colonel Mandrill agreed that it would be safe to start as soon as the other monkeys were awake and ready.

"I think," said Billy, "that this little river here is the Tuscarawas. If so, I know my way and we shall have no difficulty in finding Cloverleaf Farm. By travelling fast, if we are not stopped or hindered, we should be there by three or four o'clock in the morning."

With that encouraging prospect before them, they started in good spirits. In a surprisingly short time it seemed, Billy Whiskers began to look about for familiar landmarks.

In the distance to the left, he discovered a group of buildings which he made out to be The Corners where he had first learned about the Circus and seen the billboards. A little later he saw and recognized the big chestnut tree where Mr. Coon lived.

"We'll make for that," thought Billy. "If the old marauder is out and comes home to find a lot of monkeys perched in his tree he'll think he is having the worst nightmare that ever horrified a healthy coon. How I shall laugh at the sight of him!"

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

Billy didn't dream of the tragedy he was about to witness.

Soon they had come to the big chestnut tree, and the monkeys, without being told, quickly climbed into its lofty branches, waiting for Billy to decide on the next move.

While he was considering how he could best put in his unexpected appearance at Cloverleaf Farm, he thought he saw two figures of what seemed to be small boys hiding behind a clump of blackberry bushes not very far away. They came shortly after he arrived and evidently did not see either him or the monkeys.

He was right, for Tom and Harry Treat had come out with their guns to try and get a shot at Mr. Coon, who of late, it seems, had been very bold and had acquired the very bad habit of robbing the hen roost at Cloverleaf. Only the night before he had imprudently selected for his midnight supper the finest young white Leghorn rooster on the place. This was the more provoking because the boys had expected to enter this same rooster at the county fair to be held the next week. The Coon had now gone too far in his depredations and it was decided to put an end to him at whatever cost of time and trouble. This explains why they were watching with their guns at this time of night the old chestnut tree, for it was well known to be the Coon's house.

Presently a scratching inside the trunk of the tree might have been heard and very soon the head of the ill-fated Coon appeared at

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

the door of his house. He crawled lazily out on the great limb near at hand and was about to scratch himself, as was his wont, when he espied one of the monkeys. He couldn't believe his own eyes, so he winked hard and looked again. Instead of one, he now saw a whole group of his arch enemies here and there and everywhere, all silently watching him, Colonel Mandrill the nearest to him of all. With that he closed both eyes and toppled off the big limb to the ground. Just then two shots rang out on



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the still air, and at the same time both Tom and Harry rushed forward to make sure that the Coon did not even yet get away. He was dead. There could be no doubt of that, but no mark of a bullet was found upon him. At the unexpected sight of the monkeys, his old and most-dreaded enemies, he had perished of heart failure.

While the boys were wondering how it was that the Coon had died while the bullets from neither of their guns had touched him to their increased amazement and utter astonishment, Billy Whiskers appeared before them, coming from the other side of the great chestnut trunk.

On the part of each there was every indication of joy at the unexpected reunion.

In the meantime the monkeys had climbed down from their lofty perches and, according to their custom, silently formed a circle about their leader and his friends. When the boys saw them they thought that wonders would never cease.

It would be too much to say that they were not a little frightened at first, but as soon as they saw that Billy Whiskers took it as a matter of course and recognized who the monkeys were, they invited them all to come with Billy to the house, assuring them of a cordial welcome.

On the way, Colonel Mandrill told Billy that the wicked Coon had doubtless died of heart disease brought on by the sight of him and

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

his family, and explained that this same Coon had travelled with their Circus three summers before, that he had been placed in their cage and that they had no end of fun with him.

“Of course,” went on the Colonel, “the more he hated our teasing and the crosser he grew, the better we enjoyed the sport.”

Finally, it appeared, “old ring tail,” as the monkeys called the Coon, had made his escape just in time to save himself from nervous prostration. They had never expected to see him again.

By the time this story was finished, they had reached the barnyard. It was then between five and six o'clock of the beautiful October morning. The animals were just beginning to move about. Billy Whiskers was so excited that he could hardly contain himself. The first of his old friends he encountered was old Bob, the big Newfoundland dog. Their happy greeting was most enthusiastic. Like wildfire the news spread that Billy Whiskers had come home, and all his friends rushed to welcome him. They were all present, including Mr. and Mrs. Treat and little Dick.

What rejoicings there were! Even the monkeys were treated well on his account, though it must be confessed that it was with difficulty that aversion and suspicion of them were concealed.

Mr. Treat said that they would soon learn all about it. In this he was right for the city paper brought in by the rural delivery man that day gave a full account of the wrecked railroad train and told

Billy Whiskers at the Circus



how, in the hubbub, the famous Billy Whiskers and his trained monkeys had escaped. In another place there was a big announcement offering a reward of twenty-five hundred dollars for the safe capture of the runaways.

Mr. Treat, without telling any of the family, at once drove to the nearest telegraph office and wired the manager that the lost animals were all safe at Cloverleaf Farm.

The following morning the Circusman with Mike and Jim appeared on the scene.

It was soon arranged that Billy's engagement was considered closed. Owing to the lateness of the season and the serious wreck, the show would at once go into winter quarters.

The only difficulty was to induce the monkeys to go, leaving Billy

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

behind. It was finally decided to build on the big lumber wagon a strong removable cage. When finished, Billy, to whom the scheme had been explained, jumped in at once and the monkeys followed. At the other end of the cage two of the bars had been fixed so that one of them could be dropped down and the other raised up thus making a hole big enough for Billy to get through.

When all the monkeys were in, Mike and Jim made the opening for Billy and out he popped before the rest knew what was up. They then made an awful outcry and tore around like all possessed, but it did no good.

Billy got out of sight and sound as soon as he could, for though he did not love the monkeys and they were more mad than sad at parting with him, still, on the whole, they had had good times together and been a great help to each other.

"I feel about parting with the monkeys a good deal as I do about old Mr. Coon. Though I know he richly deserved his fate, it makes me blue to think about it. It was a disgrace to be an acquaintance of his, but I can't help admitting that he was often entertaining company. It's the same way with the monkeys."

With the reward money received for the return of the monkeys to their owners, Mr. Treat bought one of the automobiles that were then just begining to be introduced for use in the country. This pleased the boys greatly. Beside that he put a thousand dollars away

Billy Whiskers at the Circus

to be used for Tom, Dick, and Harry's education when they were older.

And so, for the present, we will leave Billy Whiskers at home again, more admired and famous than ever before, enjoying as he had never done in the old days the peace and plenty of Cloverleaf Farm, surrounded by a host of good friends and many interests.

THE END.

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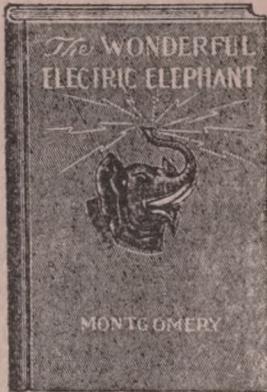
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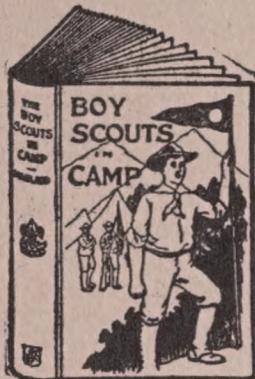


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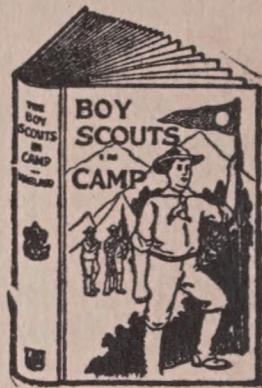
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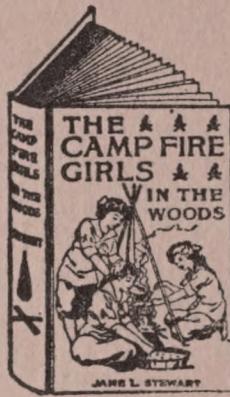
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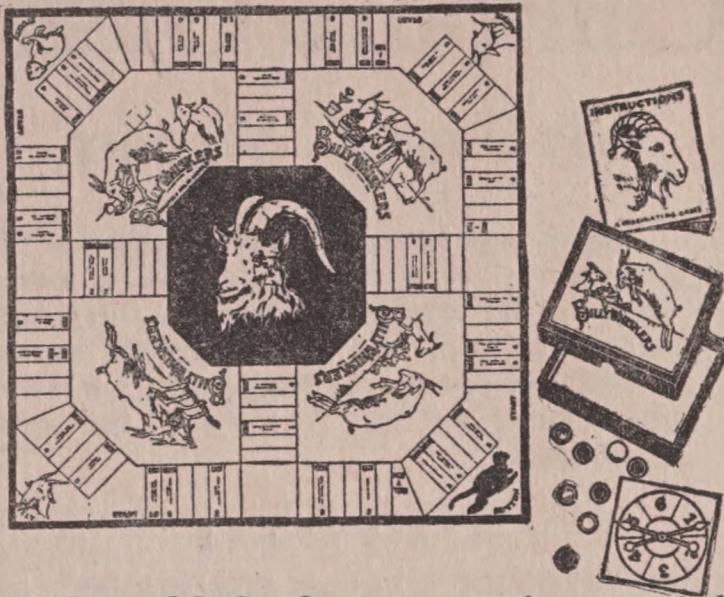
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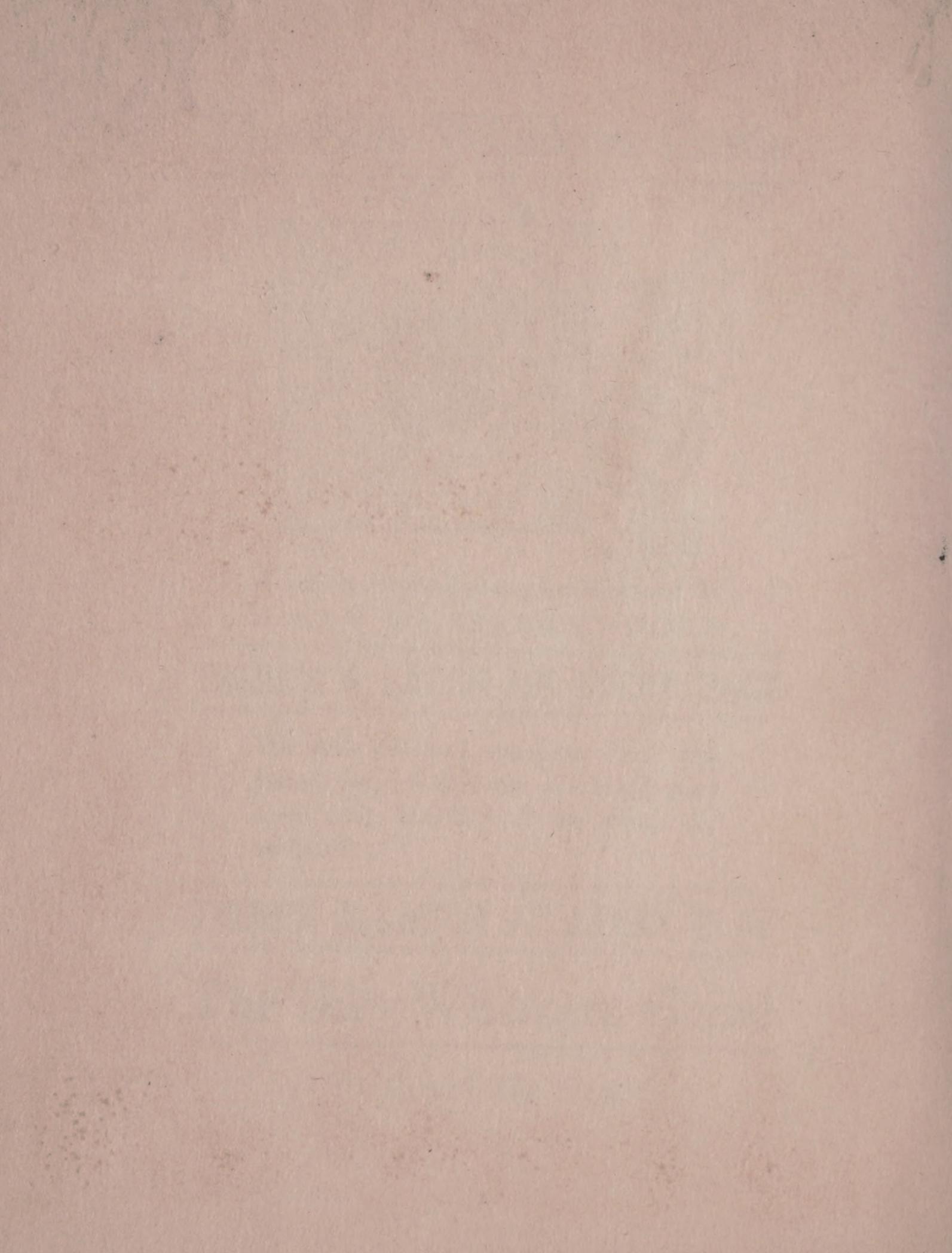
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